

Discovering the Freshness of Christ

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Introduction:

A. Prayer.

1. Father we are grateful that you want us to walk close to you.
2. Thank you that we can become intimate with you.

B. We have been eager to pursue Christ and began with great abandonment.

1. We had quite time.
2. We memorize scripture.
3. Later in life we realize that who I am is more important than what I do.
4. Ministry requires a deeper walk with Jesus.
5. If we are going to finish well we need to embrace Christ on a deeper level.

I. How do we go deeper with the Lord?

A. We spend more time with him, yet that often does not help.

B. We want to hear from God but we may not be listening.

1. Mental quiet time is necessary.
2. We need to quiet our spirits.

C. If we want Christ in our lives we must relate to the Father as Jesus did.

1. We must be dependent on God. (John 5:17-20)
2. Do God's will. (John 6:38)
3. Teach what the Spirit teaches us. (John 7:16)
4. Makes decisions based on God's will. (John 8:16)
5. Speak what pleases the Father. (John 8:28-29)
6. Let the love of God flow through us. (John 17:26)
7. If we love Jesus we will obey him and he promises to send us the Holy Spirit. (John 14:15-16)

8. The Holy Spirit will teach us all things. (John 14:26)
9. Jesus promised to send us the Spirit as a counselor. (John 16:7)
10. The Spirit will tell us things to come in our lives. (John 16:13)

D. How do we connect with the Spirit who changes us? (2 Corinthians 3:18)

1. I thought of the desert fathers who spent time with God prayerfully reading the Scriptures.
2. Benedict made the *Rule of Life* which mandated hours each day with God in the Scriptures.
3. I visited a Benedictine monastery and began these steps.

a. Reading and listening which includes reading aloud.

1. There is a difference between hearing and listening.
2. Mouthing each word makes you slow down.
3. My family was athletic, not a reading family, but I needed to learn.
4. I have taken three rapid reading courses.
5. I began reading the Bible quickly but missed much.
6. Reading aloud a text repeatedly has helped me.
7. Look for a word or phrase that interests you and allow that word to prayerfully enter your heart.

i. I was in Mark 1 and meditated on John's phrase, "I am not worthy."

ii. Then engage this phrase in dialogue with God.

iii. Allow God to speak to you through this passage.

b. Meditate on a word of God.

1. Meditation is applying a concept to me; reflection is thinking on a word or concept such as holy, gaining understanding.
2. Meditation is not easy because it takes time and we are distracted.
3. Meditation is aided by music or having a time and a place.

4. Meditation gives free range to our imagination.
5. In the movie Matthew, Jesus cleanses the leper who then rejoices greatly, which helps my mind imagine how it might have happened.
6. Meditation draws us closer to God's mind.

c. Praying is calling on the Lord to speak to us.

1. Take what you've meditated on and pray over it.
2. Pray from your heart as the word and the Spirit directs you.
3. The Holy Spirit helps us intercede for others. (Romans 8:27)
4. Listen to God and open ourselves.

d. Contemplation is the end goal of communication between God and believers.

1. We enter into the presence of God and wait.
2. We can't rush getting into God's presence.
3. This is more being than doing.
4. If you get distracted just go back to the Scripture.
5. Contemplation builds relationship, building awareness.

E. Now I want us to practice this idea of reading, meditating, praying, and contemplating God.

1. What are some thoughts we want to express to God?

- a. Speak to me.
- b. Open my heart.
- c. Clear my mind.

2. Read the Scripture. (Matthew 11:28-30)

- a. Listen for the word or phrase that strikes you.
- b. Say the phrase that has grabbed your attention.

3. Pray asking God to reveal what he wants to tell you through this word or phrase.

- a. Ask how this touches my life.
 - b. Share what you think with another.
 - c. Read the entire passage again asking if there is an invitation for me to respond.
4. Contemplate, asking the Lord how to respond.
- a. Ask if there is something specific.
 - b. Commit these thoughts to the Lord for further development.
 - c. Share what the Lord impressed on you with another.

F. I'd like to take personal time now for 15 to 20 minutes to do these four steps in either John or Mark.

1. See if a word or phrase comes to you.
2. Read aloud.
3. Move into prayer.
4. Then begin contemplating.
5. Finally, begin journaling on your experience.
6. As God speaks to you, you also speak to him.
7. Avoid long chapters, especially at first.
8. I have pursued passages in Psalms and Gospels.
9. If you do this for the next several weeks it will become very natural.
10. The objective is to draw near to the author of the word.
11. The Benedictine monks work and practice this process individually and in groups.
12. They keep Scripture thoughts in their minds all day.
13. We go into the prayer closet with God but never exit that closet.
14. Where you go is important.
 - a. Keep alert physically. Sit up straight.
15. Go.