

The Importance Of The Discipline Of Prayer

By Dennis Marcellino © 2006

Sometimes I ponder why it is so difficult to get people to place their highest interest in that which is the highest: the perfect, beautiful, intellectually and experientially superior and most-fascinating-of-all Kingdom of God...especially since it relates to something that we ALL share, which is the fact that we are on a relatively tiny planet in an unfathomably large universe where we just appeared at one point not of our own doing and we will be forced to leave at another point without being able to do anything about that. Why aren't those things the ultimate fascination of the media and the mainstream ...as opposed to lower consciousness things like sports and fiction?

It feels sometimes like I'm a person who has come back from the glorious beaches of Hawaii who can't seem to interest beach lovers on the freezing, coarse, murky Oregon beaches that such a beautiful place exists.

But as I ponder this it hits me that the reason that I'm in love with Hawaii beaches is because I've been there...and felt its soft, powdery sand and warm air and gazed into its crystal clear water which is at a perfect temperature and has every size of wave to play in. I realize that it is the great feeling of having been there that motivates me to want to go back.

Well the feeling of having experienced God deeply is far grander than the experience in Hawaii. In fact it is the greatest thing that I've ever experienced (and I've experienced many things and to many high degrees).

So my next thought is: how can I expect anyone to feel the same as me about God if they haven't had that experience? It appears that I can't. But what I can do is show people how to have that experience.

Now I have to say though that it didn't come easy to me. There was a discipline that I had to force myself to do in order to get it. And I did this discipline because I trusted the people in a community I was in at the time who were saying similar things to what I've said here about how great and all-surpassing and even necessary the experience was (all of which I now agree is true. So in that sense I hope that I'm being inspiring.). In fact there even was a peer pressure in that community to do this discipline (which I'm now VERY thankful for that having been the case).

An odd thing about this experience is that only when you're in it do you realize how great it is. When we're pulled away by worldly, less than holy focuses we kind of forget that it exists and what it feels like. Therefore it is a discipline that must be kept up (at least more so at first).

The discipline that I'm talking about is what some call prayer and others call meditation. And I highly recommend doing it. I wish that everyone would do it because they would be much more fulfilled and in peace and we'd have a wonderfully harmonious world to

live in. But of course that would be difficult to achieve because of the very impulsive, sensation-oriented world we live in.

Now there are many forms of prayer and meditation, but I'm talking about a specific kind here. It was described by the Catholic mystic St. Theresa of Avila as being "a loving gaze on God." She even has a great way of describing what it is like to be in the experiences that I've talked about here when she called them "Interior Castles" (which is also the title of one of her books).

I describe a technique to achieve what I've told you here in great detail in my book *Why Are We Here?* on pp. 61-64.

By forcefully giving yourself to this kind of discipline, you eventually SEE and EXPERIENCE that God inside is superior to anything that comes from the outside or even your own mind. This "seeing" and "experiencing" is an essential skill for achieving "the best life possible".

Then the more that you see and experience that, the more you don't let your focus slip away from God. When we first start "practicing" it (like practicing getting good at any other skill...music, writing, athletics, etc.) we will find that we need to let our focus drift away actually from the world and our ways of thinking. And even after we achieve arriving into the higher states of union with God (which even go beyond peace and crystal clarity into states of bliss and ecstasy), we can still be pulled back into worldly states and not even remember* how good the higher states are. (*At least on the feeling level. The memory that we had those high experiences never leaves and will continue to motivate us to follow God and His ways).

But gradually the higher states become more natural and automatic as you train yourself into them through the discipline. In that way you'll increase your ability to be able to walk through life without leaving a union with God. And the desire to be in that state always while living your life will lead you into a purification process that will give your life (ANYBODY'S life) a great purpose.

And you'll eventually discover that this purpose is THE purpose why you are alive. That is because it is preparing you for when you leave this relatively short, temporary earthly life for a heavenly life that goes on for eternity. But the Bible says that nothing impure will enter Heaven. Therefore you have to achieve purity before being allowed to go there (which makes sense because it wouldn't be much of a heaven if any impurity was there).

But the way that all transpires is a long discussion for another article (but which I make in my book). But for now let me say that once you are in that state, when you read the Bible you will KNOW that it is a perfect book that offers perfect advice. You'll "know" that because you will be in touch with the part of you that knows truth. And that part is a feeling which is far more advanced than our intellect (but that our intellect can approach if we work on it).