

Quiet Day 11 December 2021

SEEING WITH THE *EYES* OF THE HEART III

9:30 - 9:40 **Introduction**

9:40 - 10:40 **First Conference**

9:40 - 9:55 First session of reflections on the theme of the day

9:55 - 10:18 First session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. **Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!**

10:20 - 10:40 First session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 10:18 to 10:20. At 10:20 we will intone the bell and begin silent prayer.]

10:40 - 11:40 **Second Conference**

10:40 - 10:55 Second session of reflections on the theme of the day

10:55 - 11:18 Second session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. **Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!**

11:20 - 11:40 Second session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 11:18 to 11:20. At 11:20 we will intone the bell and begin praying.]

11:40 - 12:00 **Third Conference**

11:40 - 11:55 Third session of reflections on the theme of the day

11:55 - 12:18 Third session for thoughtful, conversational prayer: Restrooms, refreshments, stroll the grounds, reflect in the church. The entire campus is open to us. **Please maintain quiet. Please keep talking to a minimum and please talk quietly. Thank you!**

12:20 - 12:40 Third session of Silent Prayer in the Sanctuary. (Or thoughtful meditation in the Music Center.)
[Enter silently from 12:18 to 12:20. At 12:20 we will intone the bell and begin praying.]

12:40 - 1:00 **Eucharist. All are welcome.**

Seeing with the *Eyes* of the Heart

A *mystery* hidden from the foundation of the world was revealed to Saint Paul. He called it the mystery of the Gospel: In Christ, the All in all, all things are being re-created and united. Paul prayed the *eyes* of our hearts would be enlightened to *experience* this mystery, that our *inner being* would be made strong to *know and experience* a boundless love so powerful that it raised Christ from the dead. This was Saint Paul's way of describing a *transformation of consciousness*, not just seeing something different but a *different way of seeing*. We will explore practices that prepare us to receive and live into and out from this mystery of love that transforms how we see.

1. The Heart as the Spiritual Faculty

The Mystery

The *mystery* of God's will

Eph. 1:8-10 God lavished grace upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us *the mystery of God's will* ... to sum up (or bring together) all things in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth.

The *mystery* of Christ

Eph. 3:3-4 By revelation God made known *the mystery* to me, just as I wrote to you briefly above, which, when you read you will be able to understand my insight into *the mystery of Christ*, which was not made known to other generations.

The *mystery* hidden from the ages

Eph. 3:8-9 To me, lower than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ and to enlighten all as to the administration (or plan) of *the mystery which has been hidden from the ages* in God who created all things.

The *mystery* of the Gospel

Eph. 6:19 and pray for me, that the message may be given to me when I open my mouth, with boldness to make known the *mystery of the Gospel*.

What is *the mystery*? To sum up or bring together all things in Christ, the things in heaven and the things on earth (Eph 1:10).

In Christ that which divides has been torn down

Eph. 2:14 For Christ is our peace; he made the two into one, destroying the middle wall of division, that is, the hostility (he destroyed) in his flesh, the law of commandments in decrees abolishing, in order that out of the two he might create in himself one new humanity thus making peace and reconciling both in one body to God through the cross, putting to death the hostility in himself.

Enlightenment

The enlightenment of the eyes of your heart

1:17-23 I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowledge of Christ, *the eyes of your heart having been enlightened and growing in enlightenment* for you to know what is the hope of God's calling, what are the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe according to the working of God's might and strength. Which God exercised in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at God's right hand in the heavenly realms ... and gave Christ as head over all things to the church, which is Christ's body, the fullness of the one the all in all filling.

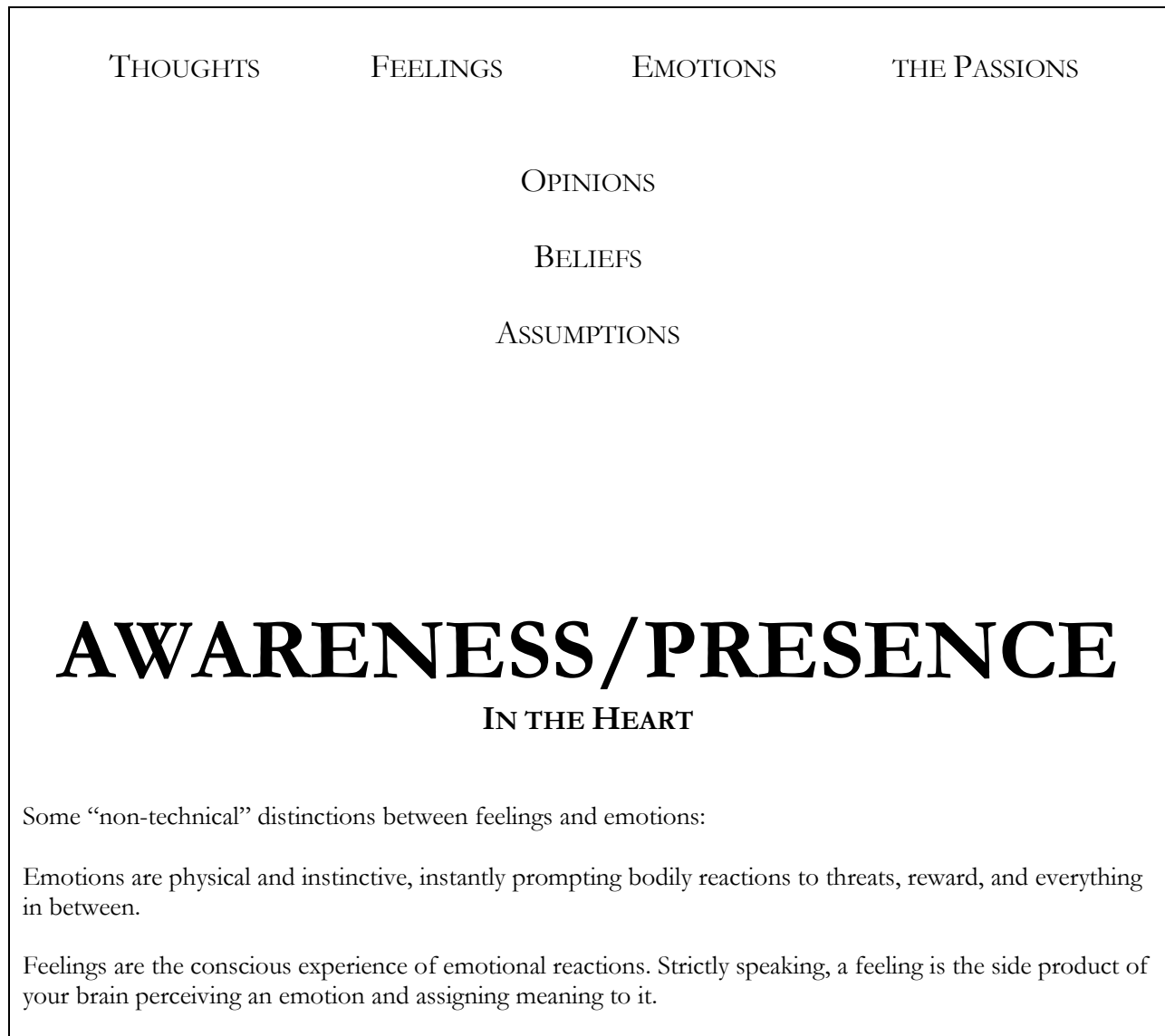
The strengthening of your inner being

3:14-19 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, *from whom every family (social grouping or tribe) in heaven and on earth derives its name*. I pray that according to the riches of God's glory God may grant you to be *strengthened in your inner being with power through the Spirit*, that Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts, in love you being rooted and grounded, in order that

you may be made strong to lay hold with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowing, in order that you may be filled up into all the fullness of God.

The Heart of Centering Prayer. Cynthia Bourgeault, p. 54:

According to the great wisdom traditions of the West (Christian, Jewish, Islamic), the heart is first and foremost *an organ of spiritual perception*. Its primary function is to **look** beyond the obvious, the bounded surface of things, and **see** into a deeper reality, emerging from some unknown profundity, which plays lightly upon the surface of this life without being caught there: a world where meaning, **insight**, and clarity come together in a whole different way. Saint Paul talked about this other kind of **perceptivity** with the term “faith” (“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”), but the word “faith” is itself often misunderstood by the linear mind. What it really designates is not a leaping into the dark (as so often misconstrued) but a subtle **seeing** in the dark, a kind of **spiritual night vision** that allows one to **see** with inner creativity that the elusive golden thread **glimpsed** from within actually does lead somewhere.



2. Contemplative Vision and Practices for being Present *in* the Heart

Philippians 2:5-8

You have the mind which was also in Christ Jesus, who though he existed in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, in the likeness of humans becoming; and sharing in human nature he humbled himself becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross. (Also see I Cor. 2:16 “But we have the mind of Christ.”)

The goal: Don't be taken out of Presence (Bourgeault)

The ultimate goal: “To integrate the active and contemplative dimensions of reality within us and around us”

Practices:

Silence and the Lord's Prayer

“Silence is not the absence of noise but the absence of resistance to God.” Thomas Keating

The Lord's Prayer: The whole journey

Guard Your heart (thoughts, feelings, emotions, passions):

Attention of the Heart and Forgiveness (beginning with forgiving one's self)

Putting the Mind in the Heart

The Active Prayer

Perhaps your sacred word/symbol, breath, or a short phrase

The Welcoming Prayer

Acknowledge, Focus

Accept/Welcome

Sink In

Let Go

Engaging Scripture

Lectio

The ART of Engaging Holy Scripture (taehs)

Journaling

3. Descriptions of the Process

The Process of Awakening

Our ultimate goal is to integrate the active and contemplative dimensions of reality within us and around us, which some mystics call ever-present awareness, enlightenment, or waking up. To handle the details of living a human life without being distracted from this primary vision is not attained through thinking, but through what might be called the practice of *just being*.

To take time just to be, which is to do nothing but be in God's presence for a regular period of time every day seems to be the shortest access to the mystery that is beyond any conceptual consideration. It leads to a communion with God that is more intimate than anybody can imagine or foresee. Divine love never stops coming but waits for us to shed the obstacles in us to awaken fully to the Divine Presence within us.

It's better to use the word "awakening" than "discovering" because "discovering" suggests effort, and even when effort is good, there is still some ego at work. It takes a while to perceive what the obstacles are. We may ruin our health with extreme bodily asceticism and die too soon. The spiritual journey normally takes a long time.

If we experience emotional suffering, there is probably something we haven't quite surrendered yet. If we truly surrender everything we possess, we will know the right thing to do spontaneously, and action inspired by the Spirit is where Centering Prayer is preparing us to go. It grows into contemplative prayer as presented in the Christian contemplative tradition. Saint John of the Cross writes that those who practice meditation keep moving to ever-deeper interior levels until they reach their inmost center, which is where God dwells and is waiting for us. ...

At some point in the spiritual journey, there is a shift where you realize that the best knowledge you can have of God is *no* knowledge. That means letting go of every thought, memory, rigid belief system, harmful forms of cultural conditioning, as well as all possessions. It doesn't mean you despise the values of belief systems because most people need some kind of discipline of mind and body in the beginning. The process of awakening normally takes time. Where is it going and where does it end? It ends in God, which is to say it never ends.

Thomas Keating from June 21, 2021 Contemplative Outreach Newsletter

Wisdom Jesus. Cynthia Bourgeault, p. 181:

"It is not about giving up things we want or rolling over and playing dead. It is about connecting with an energy of sustenance so powerful and vibrant as it flows through our being from the infinite that all else pales in comparison. It not only flows through our being; it *is* our being."

Another Dimension: Participatory or Collective Consciousness

From Presence:

We become witnesses or observers of our own thoughts (including feelings and emotions) (Martin Laird's mountain and weather)

We can become witnesses of the thoughts of others (within our selves and outside ourselves)

We can begin to learn to observe *the process* of our thoughts, that is, *how* we think and feel not just what we think and feel.

This observing the process of our thoughts can mature into seeing the many layers of assumptions, beliefs, etc. that are the "thoughtless" starting places of our thinking.

The more we become present to this deep depth of Presence, often referred to as our true self and deeper yet the Divine Indwelling ending in God Who/Which has no end, we hold the thoughts, feelings, emotions, and experiences of others. Here we fully discover our common humanity, our unity as the body of Christ, and become collective, participating in the consciousness of the One Who is the All in all.

On the one hand, there is nothing to do. We just are. Just being. Pure being. Deciding nothing. Doing nothing. Accomplishing nothing.

On the other hand, from here there is only Love. Everyone and everything matters. Everyone and everything is forgiven. We just are.

"There is no other when you have become the other, and the other is you. It is compassion: one and yet distinct from everything. The Ultimate Reality is the capacity for infinite relationship. In this becoming, everything comes into being. Only

Ultimate Reality matters, and for that reason, everything matters ... Above all, we must serve God's love and plan for the new creation." - Thomas Keating, *Reflections on the Unknowable*

i am in I Am in i am.

No one has seen God at any time, the only begotten God, who dwells into the bosom of the Father, has revealed him (Jn. 1:18).

Thomas Keating's Seven Stages of Centering Prayer

*Nothing could be more
down to earth or more
humbling than this
boundless Presence,
which just is. It doesn't
have to prove itself.
It doesn't have to
acquire anything.
It just is.*

The essence of Centering Prayer is consenting to God's presence and action within. The logo of Contemplative Outreach as depicted on our newsletter suggests how this consent normally develops. The seven stages of Centering Prayer outlined below continue these steps beyond the present logo and dispose us toward ever-deepening self-surrender. These seven stages might be called the process of Centering Prayer. I summarize them as follows:

- 1. Silence** is consenting to God's presence – what Jesus calls the Kingdom of God – within and among us. External silence supports this movement.
- 2. Solitude** flows from interior silence. Disregarding our interior dialogue leads to “resting in God” (Saint Gregory the Great), and to consciousness without particular content.
- 3. Solidarity** is the awareness of increasing oneness with God, with the whole human family, and with all creation.
- 4. Service** is following the ever-present inspirations of the Spirit not only during the time of formal prayer, but in the details of everyday life. It is a spontaneous expression of solidarity: God in us serving God in others.
- 5. Stillness** is what Jesus called “prayer in secret” (Matthew 6:6). This is the experience of God's presence beyond rational concepts, beyond preoccupation with one's personal thoughts and desires.
- 6. Simplicity** is the integration of contemplation and action, a growing capacity to live in the midst of duality– the ups and downs of daily life – without losing the non-dual perspective. Contemplation is not the same as action. They are distinct but they are not separate.
- 7. Surrender** is the total gift of self to God, a movement from union to unity. It marks the beginning of what Jesus calls “eternal life” as an abiding state.

As we are moved through the stages of grace, our perspective changes in regard to Centering Prayer, the contemplative life, and God. In between the steps there may be delightful plateaus as well as dark nights, all of which have physical, mental, and spiritual consequences. The most transforming dark nights seem to be primarily psychological states, and the darkest of all is the purely spiritual suffering that arises from just being a creature, apparently unequipped for the hazards and trials of this life, but going through them with invincible confidence in God's love.

The Absence of Resistance to God

“Life is a process of increasing intimacy with God and of relaxing into the present moment by accepting and consenting to whatever is happening, including our thoughts.

The wear and tear of daily life tests the level of our spiritual growth. If we can maintain the peace of mind that is present during the time of prayer in external difficulties and in the feeling of powerlessness, our spiritual maturity is clearly advancing. As we practice centering prayer and learn to listen to the sound of sheer silence something quite sacred is happening. Silence is not the absence of noise but the absence of resistance to God.” *Thomas Keating*