

Sermon Notes for Housegroups

Key questions:

1. What is the Contemplative Tradition?
2. Why should we explore it?

Main scriptures

Song: Psalm 42 – Sing SOF 27 – ‘As the deer pants for the water’

Read: Luke 6:12-19

12One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. **13**When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:

14Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, **15**Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, **16**Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

17He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, **18**who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, **19**and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Questions for individual or group discussion:

- A) Does the Contemplative tradition resonate with you? Or do you find it difficult to ‘Be still, and know that I am God’? (Ps 46:10). Share your experiences of how you draw close to God and let him draw close to you. This may be your ‘quiet time’, or during a structured time of prayer in the morning, during the day, evening, or before you go to bed.
- B) Have you ever been on a silent retreat or quiet day? Describe your experience.
- C) Chris talks about the three stages of contemplation as union with God, self awareness, the inward journey, and finally the outward journey. How do you identify your journey with each of these?

Song: SOF 41 : Be still, and know that I am God.

Prayer: Leader, or someone else, ends with prayer.

Introduction to “Streams”

Authentic spiritual growth requires that we venture out of our comfort zones and experience God in new and exciting ways. Change can be unsettling, but holding too tightly to security keeps many of us from growing. (J Catford – Head of Renovare UK).

When we read the Gospels, we see Jesus:

- Praying, and we listen to his teaching on the life of intimacy with God;
- Battling with Satan in the wilderness, and we listen to his teaching on the importance of a pure heart;
- Ministering in great power, and we listen to his teaching on the comfort, wisdom, and strength that comes from the Holy Spirit;
- Helping the sick and the needy, and we listen to his teaching on the importance of caring for our neighbours;
- Proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of heaven, and we listen to him reading from scripture;
- Integrate sacred and secular while observing the traditions of his faith.

These areas of the life of Jesus come together as six important strands of achieving a balanced spiritual life as a Christian. In the last 20 centuries, various movements have grown up which model this behaviour:

1. The Contemplative Movement – grew up in the fourth century as men and women left the cities of the ancient world to follow a life of solitude. The early church was strengthened by the emphasis upon intimacy with God.
2. The Holiness Movement – in the eighteenth century John Wesley and his friends formed the “Holy Club” and began focusing on moral laxity and the need for Christians to overcome sinful habits. The purifying effects of the Methodists grew into a ‘holiness movement’ within the Church.
3. The Charismatic Movement has always been with us but in the seventeenth century the Church witnessed a new movement of the Holy Spirit in the lives of men and women called “Quakers” led by George Fox. Now we see free expressions of evangelism, worship, mission and social concern propelled by the Charismatic Movement.
4. An example of the Social Justice movement is the formation of the orders of St Francis and St Clare in the twelfth century as wealthy Christians denounced their former lives to go around the countryside caring for the sick, the poor and the lame.
5. The Evangelical Movement found its full expression in the ministry of Martin Luther and other Reformers in the sixteenth century as the primacy of Scripture and the work of Jesus Christ was proclaimed anew in sermons and teaching, evangelism and personal witnessing.
6. In the eighteenth century Count Nikolas von Zinzendorf allowed remnants of the persecuted Moravian Church to build the village of Herrnhut on his estate. Initially divided, the group became unified when they experienced a powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit and they joyfully served God in the midst of baking, teaching, weaving, and raising families. This is an example of an incarnational movement.

These are just some examples of the various streams which imitate the life and ministry of Jesus. Over the next few weeks we will investigate each of these streams and ask the question, why can’t we swim in them all?