

**City Church Network - Tuesday Fellowship**

**5-5-2020 and 5-8-2020**

**Streams of the Christian Faith: Contemplative Stream**

facilitated by Phil Dillingham on 5-5-2020 and Wim Codington on 5-8-2020 (cell: 423.505.6411; email: wimcodington@gmail.com)

**Bible passages examined:**

- John 15:1-11
- I John
- Psalm 25
- Isaiah 40:29-31
- Philippians 4:6-7

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**Thoughts and ideas shared:**

- Foundational concept: Following Jesus must involve practices of prayer, meditation, reflection, and solitude which enable us to discover, enjoy, and share the presence of Jesus. We fill our minds with the truth and wait in prayer for that truth to permeate our souls and produce fruit in our lives. When we are filled with the Spirit of Jesus, we experience inner quiet and the ability to see clearly.
- Historical figures especially noteworthy:
  - Antony of Egypt (Egyptian desert father in late 3rd and early 4th centuries) - spent 20 years in the desert before beginning his public ministry; learned spiritual warfare, spiritual discipline, life of mind / heart / body
  - Ignatius of Loyola (Spanish Catholic priest in early 16th century) - warrior who learned the life of the mind / soul / prayer in a castle while recovering from injury
  - Henri Nouwen (Dutch Catholic priest in 20th century) - wrote about prayer, love, compassion, etc.
  - See more in the historical diagram in *Springs of Living Water* by Richard Foster, chapter on the Contemplative tradition



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- Themes and exhortations:
  - Foundation of belief (who is God, who am I, how can I approach God, where is the balance of power in the universe, etc.) - *Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* (1 John 4:4)
  - Expectation of spiritual warfare - story of Antony of Egypt who became an amazing healer and exorcist - *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you....Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.* (1 Peter 4:12; 5:8-9)
  - Practice of confession and repentance - keeps our souls clean and pure and keeps our ability to see and experience ("commune with") God sharp (Psalm 32; 1 John 1; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18; James 5)
  - Scripture memorization - keeps our minds disciplined; helps the word of God to dwell in us richly - *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly....* (Colossians 3:16)
  - Examen prayer from Ignatius of Loyola (connecting with feelings and desires)
    - Recall you are in God's presence ("Help me to see as You see!")
    - Give thanks to God for the day's gifts.
    - Review the last 24 hours from start to finish, searching for God's presence.
    - Express sorrow for sins or regrets.
    - Ask for God's grace for the day ahead.
  - Daily rhythms and habits
- Dangers:
  - Thinking God is far off or that there is a barrier that must be overcome for us to reach His presence
  - Thinking that God is mad at us or keeping track / score of our time with Him
  - Others?



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- Questions for discussion and reflection:
  - Where / when have I felt most connected to God?
    - What was the setting? What were the reasons for the closeness?
  - Why is solitude so important?
  - Where in my life do I desire or need greater discipline?
  - Where in my life should I invite the input and accountability of others to help me see my blind spots and compensate for my weaknesses?
- Other resources
  - *Knowing God* - J.I. Packer
  - *Desiring God* - John Piper
  - *A Praying Life* - Paul Miller (Wim hasn't read yet!)
  - *A Simple Life-Changing Prayer* - Jim Manney
  - *Spirit Walk* - Steve Smith
  - Books about spiritual discipline
  - Page 1 of [https://www.plcfantioch.org/dir/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/how\\_to\\_practice\\_each\\_of\\_the\\_streams\\_of\\_faith.pdf](https://www.plcfantioch.org/dir/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/how_to_practice_each_of_the_streams_of_faith.pdf)
- A prayer: *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)*

