

REFLECTION TOOL #10 AN INVITATION TO GROWTH

A Weeklong Exercise in Spiritual Formation

Introduction: God leaves us free to respond to Him in love or to ignore Him in the midst of our pre-occupations. David prayed for an "undivided heart" in Psalm 86 in order to fear God and walk in His truth. Self-awareness is necessary in this process of recollection. Self-discovery can become self-centered introspection without God's guidance. But self-discovery with God as our guide brings inner healing, growth and joy. It is hoped that this weeklong exercise will help you to grow in the likeness of Christ.

DAY ONE: THE PAST

Read Ecclesiastes 3:1-9, 13, 14. In silence review the various stages of your own spiritual journey. Note on paper in a phrase or two each significant stage or turning point of your journey. Spend some time in prayer thanking God for His leading in the past, praying for the influential people involved in your spiritual journey and seeking His help in this exercise.

Choose one of the stages of your journey and write more about it. Discuss some of the main issues you were dealing with. What kind of time was it? Who were the people involved? What were the main events? What feelings were present? Choose one or several Scripture passages which serve as metaphors or images of this stage. Give the stage a name.

DAY TWO: THE PRESENT

Read John 15. Does your life evidence fruitfulness, barrenness or productivity? What might be preventing the intimacy with the Father spoken of here? Is there any coldness, rebellion or fear? How evident is His joy in your life?

Write a dialogue between you and the Father about your relationship with Him. Discuss any concerns about the relationship and the effect this relationship has on your whole life.

DAY THREE: A CALLING

Spend some time in serious reflection on this question before giving an answer. Many different voices call for our attention. Which inner voices do you hear the most? (optimism, fearfulness, adventure, benevolence, selfishness, guilt, etc.) Which of these voices are the most helpful? Which are the most distracting? Which control your life? How can you distinguish God's voice?

Read Ephesians 3:16-21. Meditate on God's desire for you as stated in this passage.

DAY FOUR: RELATIONSHIPS

Review the main relationships you have with people. Note any growth which has taken place in you because of these relationships. Note any growth in others because of your love and care of them. Is there a relationship which involves any unfinished business or conflict? Write a

paragraph about this relationship and its negative and positive aspects. Note what you sense God's desire is in this relationship. Receive from Christ whatever you need to do His bidding. Let Him help you to relinquish any fear, anger, hatred, jealousy, despair, etc., connected with the relationship.

Meditate on Romans 12:3-21. Write down what God says to you through this word about relationships.

DAY FIVE: PRAYER

What impact has prayer had on your life and ministry in recent days? What has been encouraging? What has been difficult? Were there any surprises? Make some notes in your journal regarding these questions.

Spend time in confession. Open your heart to God in true penitence.

Confess the sin of vanity in _____

Confess the sin of falsehood in _____

Confess the sin of laziness _____

Confess harboring vengeful, bitter, lustful, jealous, or proud thoughts such as _____

Confess a need of reconciliation with _____

Confess being a stumbling-block in _____

Confess receiving a blessing thanklessly _____

Confess a failure of self-control in _____

Confess an opportunity lost, such as _____

(adapted from A Diary of Private Prayer by John Baillie)

Reflect on the cost of these sins to yourself, God and others. Accept God's forgiveness, and seek the forgiveness of others if appropriate.

DAY SIX: CELEBRATION

Read Psalm 150, 34, 40 or another Psalm of praise. Sing a song, write a Psalm or poem, paint a picture, give God glory in some way which is meaningful to you.

DAY SEVEN: NEW CHOICES

Read Phil. 2:1-11. Reflect on what God has done for you. He constantly offers us new and fuller life in Him. What direction do you sense God moving you? Consider the gifts and resources you have been given for sharing God's love with others. What new commitment are you being called to? Name one to three goals to which you feel called. List the necessary steps to be taken to accomplish them. Note resources of help and encouragement. Spend some time in thankfulness to God for His past help and seek His enablement as you begin to take these new steps of growth in Christ.

*Suggested length, 3 pages
Please attach to completed Reflection Tool Cover Sheet*