

The Quiet Spirit

Mediation has been a consistent thread through my lifelong spiritual journey. I don't mediate regularly: my spirit tells me when I need to mediate – particularly when it is troubled. It is a time to find the quiet spirit within which is the closest I believe we can get to an experience of God.

A passage from the poem East Coker, one of the four quartets by T. S. Elliot, captures the process of meditation most succinctly for me:

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought;
So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.

Into the Closet

In Matthew 6:6-15, Christ teaches us how to pray:

6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread.

12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:

15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Here the “closet” in verse 6 is that place within where the quiet spirit resides. In verse 7, Christ tells us simply to state our case and shut up unless we feel it necessary to tell God how to do his job. In fact we need say nothing because verse 8 tells us that God knows the thoughts of our minds and the desires of our heart before we can speak of them.

Verses 9 through 11 tell us how to prepare to approach God after we have entered our closet. The key instruction which encompasses all impediments to attuning oneself with Christ's spirit is stated in verses 12, 14 and 15: forgiveness of trespasses.

The Requirement for Attaining the Spirit of Christ

The greatest blocks to achieving the meditative state are a busy mind and/or disturbed emotions. Many of Christ's teachings can be viewed in part as instruction to avoid these conditions that block our approach to God. So consider the idea of "forgiveness".

We say, as Christ taught us to pray, "forgive us our trespasses (the **Tyndale Bible**) as we forgive those who trespass against us." Consider the second part of this sentence first. Presumably the act of a trespass against us has caused us harm or hurt in some manner. Our reaction may be hurt, resentment, anger, hatred, a desire for revenge, or some other emotion that centers our attention. Emotional turmoil prevents our reconciliation with God.

The importance of the act of forgiveness is to release the emotion binding us. Forgiving someone does not necessarily do anything for them but it is essential to be able to find our quiet spirit.

The first part of the sentence speaks to all acts of harm or hurt that we have inflicted on others. Jesus has given us instruction on how to approach those we have harmed in an effort of reconciliation. But something more is needed. We need to forgive ourselves and this is done by going to God in prayer and asking for release from our sin.

To sum up, to attain the Spirit of Christ, to approach God as close as we may, it is necessary to look inwards not outwards. It is necessary to shut out the thoughts of the day and the emotions associated with all that has gone on in our life. This may be a life's work. But what could offer a greater reward?