

Soul Strong Study – Week 4 “SOUL CARE”

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(Chapter 3 “Dwell Deep” in *Soul Strong*)

“I abide daily in God’s presence, nourishing my soul.”

“For He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul He fills with good things.”

Psalm 107.8-9

“What is running your life at any given moment is your **soul**. Not external circumstances, not your thoughts, not your intentions, not even your feelings, but your soul. The soul is that aspect of your whole being that correlates, integrates, and enlivens everything going on in the various dimensions of the self. The soul is the life center of human beings. ...You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life. Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day. The most important thing in your life is not what you do; it’s who you become. That’s what you will take into eternity. Your soul is not just something that lives on after your body dies. It’s the most important thing about you. It’s your life.” Dallas Willard

Dwell in Me and I will dwell in you. John 15.4

For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in Me. Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. John 15.4-5

Slow Down

He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. Psalm 23.2-3

Characteristics of the Disintegrated Soul

- The soul apart from God mistakes itself for God.
- We are dead in trespasses and sins, enslaved to desires, or blinded by false ideas, distorted images, and misinformation.
- We do not know where we are or how to get where we want to go.
- We are locked in a self-destructive struggle with ourselves and all those around us.
- Our inner condition makes it impossible for us to deal with the demands of life. We cannot ‘get it all together.’
- Performance is at a premium because life lacks meaning.
- Sin and disobedience make it impossible for our soul to rest.
- We struggle with life on our own.

Characteristics of the Integrated Soul

- The healthy soul is one in which all the essential parts of the human being are organized around God, as they are restored and sustained by Him.
- We embrace an overall, settled condition of life in the kingdom of God.
- We are prepared for and capable of responding to the situations of life in ways that are good and right.
- Whatever the circumstances, we are enabled by Christ to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.
- We do not have to look out for ourselves because God is in charge of our life.
- We seek to do everything in Jesus’ name, knowing that what we do counts for eternity and is preserved there.

(from John Ortberg’s “Soul Keeping” study guide)

Observe Stillness and Silence

In return and rest you will be saved, quietness and trust will be your strength. Isaiah 30.15

Be still, and know that I am God! Psalm 46.10

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“To be in solitude is to choose to do nothing. For extensive periods of time. All accomplishment is given up. Until we enter quietness, the world still lays hold of us. When we go into solitude and silence we stop making demands on God. It is enough that God is God and we are His.” (Ruth Haley Barton)

My Desire and God’s Invitation

Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Matthew 11.28-29

Nephesh = _____

Unclog the Springs

My people have committed two crimes. They have forsaken Me, the Spring of Living Water. And they have dug wells, broken wells that can’t hold water. Jeremiah 2.13

What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord. When they walk through the Valley of Weeping, it will become a place of springs. The autumn rains will clothe it with blessings. They will continue to grow stronger. Psalm 84.5-7

Keeper of the Springs (Peter Marshall)

Linger in God’s Presence

“Stand at the crossroads and look, ask for the ancient paths, as where the good way is and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” Jeremiah 6.16

“Jesus calls the weary to Himself. He does not call the self-sufficient... He calls those exhausted from toil, from just getting through the day. Those weighed down by sin and sorrow. These, not the confident and successful.” Tish Harrison Warren “Prayers in the Night”

But I’m in the very presence of GOD— oh, how refreshing it is! I’ve made Lord GOD my home. GOD, I’m telling the world what you do! Psalm 73.28

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever. Psalm 16.11

“...for I am gentle and lowly in heart.” Jesus in Matthew 11.29

“Jesus is not trigger-happy. Not harsh, reactionary, easily exasperated. He is the most understanding person in the universe. The posture most natural to Him is not a pointed finger, but open arms.” Dane Ortlund

**Slow Down
Observe Stillness and Silence
Unclog the Springs
Linger in God's Presence**

"We now begin to think with love. Our decisions become increasingly bathed in a loving rationality... We become, for example, more sensitive to the hurts and sufferings of others. We walk into a room and quickly know who is sad or lonely or dealing with a deep, inexpressible sorrow. In such a case we are able to slip over beside them and sit in silence, bringing comfort and understanding and healing, now that 'deep calls to deep (Psalm 42.7)" Richard Foster

Come near to God and He will come near to you. James 4.8

Closing Prayer – singing over you

1. There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God;
A place where we our Savior meet, Near to the heart of God.
2. There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God;
A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God.
O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God;
Hold us, who wait before Thee, Near to the heart of God. -Cleland B. McAfee 1903

Small Group Discussion

1. What was one thing you remember from working through Ch. 3 "Dwell Deep?"
2. Would someone like to share their answer (p46) to Jesus' question "*What do you want me to do for you?*"
3. On pages 55-58 I listed 7 benefits of intentional time apart. Can you think of at least one soul care benefit from your time in quarantine?
4. As you studied the names of God and Jesus (pp60-63) share one that particularly spoke to you.
5. The final exercise was to plan your own daily time with God. What materials will you choose to do this, and what elements might you incorporate in this time?
6. On p49-51, I explained the process of Lectio (pronounced Lexio) Divina – spiritual reading. Turn to next page, and your group leader will read Isaiah 30.15-21, then each of you follow the steps of lectio divina as you re-read each time. The leader will guide the time by reading each step.
7. Close in prayer.

HOMEWORK – Please try to complete chapter 4 "Pray Always" before we gather again next week. Pray for those in your group.

Lectio Divina – Divine Reading

Isaiah 30.15-21

¹⁵ *This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: “Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength. But you would have none of it.”*¹⁶ *You said, ‘No, we will get our help from Egypt. They will give us swift horses for riding into battle.’ But the only swiftness you are going to see is the swiftness of your enemies chasing you!*¹⁷ *One of them will chase a thousand of you. Five of them will make all of you flee. You will be left like a lonely flagpole on a hill or a tattered banner on a distant mountaintop.”*¹⁸ *So the LORD must wait for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the LORD is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for his help.*¹⁹ *O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. He will be gracious if you ask for help. He will surely respond to the sound of your cries.*²⁰ *Though the Lord gave you adversity for food and suffering for drink, he will still be with you to teach you. You will see your teacher with your own eyes.*²¹ *Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, “This is the way you should go,” whether to the right or to the left.*

Here are 8 suggested steps for practicing your own Lectio Divina.

1. **Prepare** - Before you read anything, quiet your heart, breathe deeply and spend some time in silence.
2. **First reading** – Read the Scripture slowly, pausing at each punctuation to breathe and let the words soak in. After this first reading, spend at least two minutes in silence.
3. **Second reading** – As you slowly read the passage again, allow your pauses between phrases to be longer as you determine which words seem to be speaking directly to you. Take some time to write down thoughts, words and phrases after you have finished this second reading.
4. **Third reading** – In your third reading, be sure and stop when you come to one of those words or phrases that spoke to you earlier. Repeat it in a prayerful way as you await God’s whisper into your heart.
5. **Ponder** – As you continue to reflect on those special words, repeat them and prayerfully consider what God might be trying to say to you. Submit your thoughts, emotions, and complementary passages to filter through, noting what deep part of you is touched by these particular words.
6. **Pray** – Now it’s time to actually ask God “What would you say to me today through this verse?” Enter a season of silence as you listen to the Spirit. Begin to jot down any thoughts that come unbidden as you sense His presence.
7. **Rest** – Breathe deeply and settle comfortably in your seat as you embrace a season of silence for at least five minutes. Relish this time simply basking in God’s presence. You don’t need to do anything at all. Just *be* in the moment.
8. **Respond** – As your time in this passage draws to a close, ask God “As a result of these word gifts, what would you have me do?” He may be asking you to add (or delete) something to your life. He may be calling you out to love and risk and sacrifice. Maybe you will change your attitude. Write out the assignment you believe He is giving you. And close by thanking God for meeting you in this sacred place through His Word. As you leave the silence and reflection, be at peace.