

Contemplative Practice

1. Cultivating a lifestyle of contact with God is an endeavor to stop living life from the edges and to start living life from the Essence.
2. Cultivating this lived process is vital to real life. Especially in our Western proclivity to exalt knowledge, we must beware of being intoxicated by the message of the good news, resulting in living merely from the ideas of the gospel.
3. Our call to live life for God must issue forth from our abiding in him.
4. Developing patterns and practices of living that engage contact with our Creator enable life to be lived from our true Center, which is Christ in us. He is our living hope (1 Pet. 1:3). He is our "righteousness, sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). He is our "hope of glory" (Col. 1:27.) He is our new life, our real life:

Colossians 3:3-4 *For [as far as this world is concerned] you have died, and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, Who is our life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in [the splendor of His] glory. [AMP]*

5. The spiritual journey can be made. The spiritual reality at the center of your being is a real, indwelling person—Christ! The Essence of life is contact with God. We must refuse to allow our lives to be trivialized. Spirit-filled living is possible.

Why Contemplative Practices?

1. **Polishing the mirror.** Our initial and primary assignment as human beings is to bear God's image in this world (Gen. 1:26-27).
2. **Providing leadership for your own life.** Without leading your own life you will drift with the cultural currents or merely give in to fleshly living.
3. **A growing commitment to reality.**

2 Corinthians 4:18 *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

4. **A journey that leaves self behind.**

Luke 9:23-25 *And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. 24 For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. 25 For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"*

5. **Establishing a beachhead for God's presence in this world.**

1 Corinthians 3:16 *Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

6. **Being fully present to ourselves and to God.** Contemplative practice provides entry points into God's presence.

7. **Opening our entire being to our creative potential.** Through personal contact with God, the Spirit's creative energy is more readily available to flow through us.

8. **Bringing our entire being, body, soul, and spirit into harmony.**

Psalms 90:1-2 *Lord, you have always been our eternal home, our hiding place from generation to generation. 2 Long before you gave birth to the earth and before the mountains were born, you have been from everlasting to everlasting, the one and only true God.*

9. **Providing a means of abiding in God.** Contemplative practice saves us from the Western habit of merely thinking about God.

Job 12:10 *In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind.*

Isaiah 42:5 *Thus says God the Lord—He Who created the heavens and stretched them forth, He Who spread abroad the earth and that which comes out of it, He Who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it...*

Acts 17:24-28 *The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else...28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.*

10. **A means of verification.**

11. **These are the truths that each one of us is called to know for our self.** They cannot be known by mere thinking; they must be known by experience. That is the purpose of contemplative practice.

a. C.S. Lewis writes about the need for personal experience of God in his book, *Miracles*:

One moment of even feeble contrition or blurred thankfulness will, at least in some degree, head us off from the abyss of abstraction. It is Reason herself which teaches us not to rely on Reason only in this matter. For Reason knows that she cannot work without materials. When it becomes clear that you cannot find out by reasoning whether the cat is in the linen cupboard, it is Reason herself who whispers, "Go and look. This is not my job: it is a matter for the senses." So here. The materials for correcting our abstract conception of God cannot be supplied by Reason: she will be the first to tell you to go and try experience—"Oh, taste and see that Lord is good."

The Divine Indwelling

1. The Western church is often preoccupied with form but has an absence of depth. (See 2 Cor. 3:18)
2. Your life is created to be a dwelling place of God. (See Ephesians 2:21-22; 3:19).
3. We are to be pursuing the great mystery, which is "*Christ in you, the hope of glory.*" (Col. 1:27)
4. Four things that Christianity is not:
 - a. It is not *how many*
 - b. It is not success through *tribalism* (Eph. 2:14-18)
 - c. True spirituality is not about *fear* (1 Jn. 4:18-19)
 - d. Christianity is not primarily a moral matter; it is primarily a *mystical matter*
5. True Christianity is about being *connected with God*. (Jn. 17:26)

John 17:26 *I made you known to them, and I will continue to do so, in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and so that I also may be in them.*