

Meditation 3 (And Now) Don Stephens

Some thoughts about praying and prayer

- 1.If God does exist, and if what the opening words of the Old Testament say about his /her creation, are true, then **praying should be as natural and as easy as breathing.**
- 2.When we say that we cannot pray, we are not speaking about our ability or inability but rather about our own faith. Speaking about how and what we cannot believe to be true - that **the Creator of this vast universe, in whose minute corner we tentatively exist, somehow wants to be involved with us.**
- 3.How do I learn to pray? Well to use a way that John Rowland taught me when I went to him for advice when I struggled. **Simply take two chairs – sit in one, God is in the other, talk to him.** Take the risk, set aside the doubt, and the whispering mind – then trust the response / reply / answer / emotion – whatever. For it will come. Another way to use, and this is from Francis Cull, is **when you cannot pray, to take the time to tell God about not being able to pray.** It also works...
- 4.Remember ‘the Cloud of Unknowing’, the 14th Century anonymous treatise on the spirituality. **“By love can God be gotten and holden, by thought and understanding, never!”**
- 5.Part of our problem can also be language – you have to speak to the Creator in a special sacred language. Latin, Elizabethan English, Ordentlike Afrikaans etc. **The best language to use when praying is the language of the heart. The language you used as a small child.** And be careful about big theological / technical words. If God needs a dictionary to understand what you are saying, then you might be doing something, but you are not praying
- 6.Also remember that the prayer you share with God is a gift from him / her, and that when we pray all that we are doing is responding to his / her invitation to an encounter deep within the depths of our being. **God invites / initiates, we respond.**
- 7.So much more can be said about prayer and about our struggle to pray – but we must also remember that sometimes, when we struggle or somehow cannot pray, **our struggle is of God, who invites us gently to explore with him / her – to find new and exciting and important ways of encountering the reality of his / her presence in our lives and our world.**

8. There is no right way to pray – only the way God has given to you. Don't try to work it out – do it, and in the doing of it, you will grow and experience God in ways yet undreamed of...

Faith
is that growing
awareness

that you have created us
and are still at work
creating us,
and all that is around us.
The whole universe,
in fact, however enormous
it may seem.

Faith
is that growing
awareness
that your love for us,
your love for what
you create
is so great
that we will never fully
understand it.
That you came and became
one of us,
that you died for us
and even when we rejected you,
you returned again
in love,
so that we might be like you.

Faith
is that growing
awareness
that you at this very moment
sustain and enable us
in that same love.
Not only us
but all that is
within this universe.

Faith
is that growing
awareness
that when this part
of our journey is over
you wait there
on the other side,
yearning and longing
to welcome us home.

This is what faith is

Some reasons for doing what we do

“each life of prayer, then, however deeply hidden or apparently solitary in form, will affect the life of the whole Body...”

“All the great masters of worship insist on the importance of the secret personal life of adoration as ‘the first essential for a Christian’”

From Evelyn Underhill

Adoration,
leads into thanksgiving
– the first
is the beginning
and once done,
leads into the second,
and when that journey
is complete and fulfilled,
consecration takes place.
As in the Eucharist so in all of life...
We begin by
answering your invitation,
then find ourselves
speechless
when confronted
by your love,
grateful
for our creation,
and your coming to us.
And then,
when it is ready and available,
in a sacred, simple meal,
become part of that love,
and that coming...

“Set apart a certain amount of time morning and evening, whether the mind is filled with God or not, doing so with no other object than the adoration which is the duty of his creature. Adore him with all the capacity you have, yet without anxiety as to the degree of your success or of your love, as to whether you are concentrated on God or on yourself, whether your time is profitable or wasted... there is no question here of stages of prayer. We are concerned only with adoring God without any motive save that we are in duty bound to do so, without any desire save to offer adoration, or if we fail in this to accept failure with patience and humility... The value of our prayer depends on the degree to which we die to self in offering it. There is no

place for calculations or precautions. Strive to adore, and let that suffice...”

Jacues Benigne Bossuet, writing to one of his penitents