

Thinking about PRAYER

By Bob Young

[Notes written after reading Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit*]

Prayer is essential to one's spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is a call to discipleship, which is another way of describing the disciplined life. Discipleship and discipline can never be separated. Discipline without discipleship leads to formalism; discipleship (so-called) without discipline ends in romanticism.

Prayer keeps our hearts and minds anchored in God.

Prayer is making space for God. It is therefore intentional, concentrated, consistent, and constant.

Prayer is packing our minds with God, resetting our heart on God and the kingdom.

Prayer is establishing the center of our lives, establishing that our identity is outside of ourselves.

Prayer is wasting time with God. We struggle with prayer because we see it as something to be done. We consider it a duty, requisite, responsibility. Prayer does not have value for what it can do for us, what it can accomplish. Prayer has spiritual value but it is not a way to get things done. If we focus on what is happening, God cannot easily connect with us. We must detach ourselves from the results we are hoping for. Prayer is being unbusy with God instead of busy (or unbusy) with other things.

Prayer is being alone with God. Read again the biblical text of Mark 1:32-39, especially v. 35. Prayer is solitude, contemplation, renewed mission, insight, affirmation. Prayer is opening oneself so God can work his will. Without a lonely place, our lives are in danger.

Prayer is practicing the present moment. Prayer is practicing the presence of God, seeing that the separate prayer time apart from other time is an erroneous idea. We pray because we are aware of God's presence with us continually.

Taking time to pray – requires time, place, and of most importance, the ability to escape distractions.