

## Practicing the Presence of Jesus

### Week 4 – Wholeness through the Presence of Jesus - Summary and Notes

#### Steps for Praying Together (Groups of Two, preferably, or Three)

- 1) **Briefly tell the story of your fragment. Listeners, help with questions that invite entering the experience (How? and What? – not Why?)** – don't analyze it, but experience it – enter into it together.
- 2) **Tell Jesus how you feel about this experience** (the fragment that is)
- 3) Pray together a simple prayer out loud **asking Jesus to show his presence** and how he is involved in the fragment.
- 4) **Stay briefly in silence** together, allowing yourselves to become aware of Jesus' presence.
- 5) After a maximum of two or three minutes, and beginning with the person being prayed for, **describe whatever you become aware of during this time** (staying 'in prayer' - perhaps eyes shut – if anything still feels ongoing). Try not to say "nothing" – include anything at all that you're aware of such as "I just notice that I am frustrated that nothing is happening" or "Just like I expected – nothing" or "I feel like I can't let myself be open" or "I just started to think about what I'm having for lunch."
- 6) **Then the listener can briefly share anything they became aware of** which they think might be helpful.
- 7) If it feels like you've had some connection with Jesus, then
  - a) spend a moment with any **response** that seems appropriate,
  - b) give **thanks** together,
  - c) **switch** to the other person
- 8) If not, spend some time "trouble-shooting." Simply and directly, ask Jesus to reveal to you **what is in the way** or what is making it difficult to perceive his presence. Then repeat 4, 5, 6, and 7 if possible.
- 9) If the experience still feels stuck or more frustrating than helpful, pledge to be praying about this for the next few days, trusting that God will break through quietly or powerfully, giving you some "glimpse into truth" this week. Journal or dialogue with a friend. If it still feels stuck after a week, prayerfully choose one of these options to follow through:
  - a) ask a friend to come and pray with you about this,
  - b) ask your small group to pray with you,
  - c) stay for prayer after church,
  - d) call me (seriously).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Don't let the steps make you think the process is complicated. Remember the simple heart of the process is this: **bringing together an honest experience of a piece of your life with a "glimpse into truth" or an experience of Jesus' presence.** The steps are just a possible map for the new traveller.

### **Suggestions to chew on:**

- 1) An awareness of God's loving presence in, with and around us is one of the most central and pervasive teachings throughout the Bible and particularly in Jesus' teaching of the kingdom of God.
- 2) Until a deep heart belief that God is present with us at all times becomes our "default" belief (our most normal belief unless something specifically causes it to be otherwise), we need to intentionally and consciously practice God's presence as often as we can.
- 3) For this awareness to sink into our heart, we need to involve our true emotions, imagination, senses and active responses. It is not enough to just think right thoughts.
- 4) Our goal is to attune our lives to God's presence with us – resting securely in his presence, sharing God's perceptions of others and the world, and living in the way His Spirit invites and enables us.
- 5) Living in God's presence requires either obedience or struggle with God; anything else creates the experience of distance.
- 6) We are quite unlikely to spontaneously remember to practice Jesus' presence. In order to draw our attention to Jesus, we need to structure into our life:
  - a) associations (like checking in with Jesus' presence every time we go for a walk),
  - b) rituals (like a daily prayer/reading or "examen"), and
  - c) traditions (like thinking of potlucks with friends as a form of communion)
- 7) Becoming very familiar with the Jesus of the gospels helps us more easily and naturally discern Jesus' spiritual presence in and with us.
- 8) When we notice or when God shows us that a piece of our lives is disconnected from God's presence, we (alone or with others):
  - a) enter into this disconnected piece and recall what it feels like
  - b) tell Jesus how we feel
  - c) invite Jesus to be with us and show himself to us
  - d) trust in his presence and persist through any obstacles