

He's Sweet I Know
[Deeper Sheet 8.30.09]

Read 2 Corinthians 3v18 + Psalm 27v4

Meditation is often misunderstood. The word conjures the image of a robed sage with closed eyes, concentrating in silence. But life usually feels far from *that* tranquil. The pace is hectic. There is always noise, and concentrating is something our multi-tasking culture doesn't set us up well to do. But we still meditate. It turns out that meditation isn't about the mind; it's about the heart. To meditate on something is to ponder it in your heart, just as Mary pondered the news that she was carrying the savior of the world in her belly. To meditate on something is to mull it over, to chew on it, to sit with it long enough that it sinks into you and gets into your bloodstream. No matter how busy we are, we still meditate. We're meditating with the things that occupy our heart space in morning routines or during the morning commute, going for a jog, or trying to fall asleep at night.

For Christians, meditation is less a discipline that we "do" than a way of life that we embody. To meditate is the process of beholding, seeking, and displaying the glory of God, and we do that by immersing ourselves in God's story. There are all kinds of ways to look at the Bible, and we often neglect the native tongue of the Bible: story. God is a storyteller. God loves to tell stories. Whenever Jesus preached his message of the Kingdom of God, he would tell stories. He would say, "The Kingdom of God is like a man who had two sons." Or "The Kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field." It's as if God understands that we are hard-wired for stories. The Bible is a story that begins with God creating a good world. For various reasons the stewards of creation choose to reject God and one another. But God doesn't give up on his creation; he chooses a people through which to rescue the world. Unfortunately the people continually fail to embody God's love for the world. Yet in the midst of this people God placed his own son to rescue, redeem, and restore all humanity through his life, death, and resurrection. Now through Christ, all people are being invited to join in the story of redemption and new creation.

As followers of Jesus, we are participants in God's great story of creation and redemption. We are people of the story. We orient our lives around that story. We gather to tell the story, to hear the story, to re-enact the story, and to find our part in the story. The story is cherished here. We need a whole community committed to loving, embracing, and living out this story right here, right now. Meditation is the process of beholding, seeking, and displaying the glory of God, and we do that by immersing ourselves in God's story.

Allowing ourselves to be immersed in this great story of redemption actually transforms us. It grows in us, transforming our wants, our hopes, and our desires. We are converted from a life of looking out for our own interests to one in which we look out for the interests of others. The very identity of those who are in Christ is changed. Hearts of stone become hearts of flesh. In fact, the passionate pursuit of the story becomes our identity, our meditation. We're meant to remember, recite, and re-enact the story in all we do.

What kinds of things are continually occupying your head/heart space?

What we meditate on slowly begins to transform and shape us. How are you being shaped by the things that currently occupy your head/heart space?

Take 5-10 minutes and write down all of the noise inside your head and heart. This is sometimes called *stream of consciousness writing*. Be mindful of the fact that these noises are constantly fighting for your heart's attention. Now choose a small section of Scripture to read aloud. If you can't think of anything, try using Psalm 13. Read it out loud three times. Allow for a brief period of silence after each reading in order to ponder what you've just read. This practice is called *Lectio Divina*. During the first reading, listen for a word, phrase, or idea that captures your attention. Then focus your attention on that word, phrase, or idea, repeating it to yourself quietly. During the second reading, pay attention to how the word, phrase, or idea is speaking to your life. What does it mean for you? What is it telling you about your life? During the last reading, focus on what you sense God calling you to do or to become because of the passage.

What word phrase or idea jumped out at you?

Why did it seem significant?

How might that word help you orient your life around God's story of redemption this week?