

Facing the Darkness with the LORD of Light

Here are a few reasons why we are meeting together.

Here is a passage that illustrates a pattern.

Isaiah 8:21-9:7

They will pass through the land, greatly distressed and hungry. And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness. . . . But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Here are skills we will push forward:

- Talk to God
- Share your heart with other people
- Invite others to talk
- Together, listen to God

Talk to God

Ps 62:8 - Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. *Selah*

Hos 7:14 - They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds

I. What is the heart? The real you

A quick tour: You first notice desires and emotions, then it goes deeper. It is about God and the direction we face in life.

A. Enter here:

What do you want? Really want?

What do you desire most?

You have natural desires for life and love.

A simple question: How do you feel?

- Content, joyful
Life and love are secured.
Things are right.
You are relaxed, grateful.
- Happy
Desires are satisfied.
You are hopeful, optimistic, interested.
- Sad, grieved
Desires have been taken away.
You are hurt, hopeless, tired, bored, guilty, depressed, a failure, empty (nothing), lonely.
- Anxious
Desires are at risk.
You are overwhelmed.
Something bad is coming.
You are stressed, insecure, afraid, hopeless.
- Angry

Desires are at risk or have been taken, and you want to do something about it.
You are offended, annoyed, critical, grumbling, complaining, humiliated.

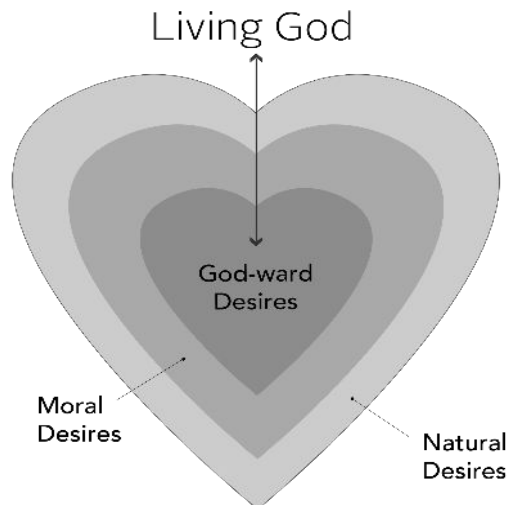
- Ashamed
You have been disgraced and touched by death.
Desire died.
You are unacceptable, unlovable.

B. A little deeper:

What direction are you going? Good or evil

C. Deeper yet, to the very center of your being:

Who do you love? Your idols or the Maker of heaven and earth?



II. Put your heart into Words to the Lord

A. Psalm 10

Get Started. Why, O LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

The Details. In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak, who are caught in the schemes he devises. He boasts of the cravings of his heart; he blesses the greedy and reviles the LORD. In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. His ways are always prosperous; he is haughty and your laws are far from him; he sneers at all his enemies. He says to himself, "Nothing will shake me; I'll always be happy and never have trouble." His mouth is full of curses and lies and threats; trouble and evil are under his tongue. He lies in wait near the villages; from ambush he murders the innocent, watching in secret for his victims. He lies in wait like a lion in cover; he lies in wait to catch the helpless; he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net. His victims are crushed, they collapse; fall under his strength. He says to himself, "God has forgotten; he covers his face and never sees."

"Help!" Arise, LORD! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless. Why does the wicked man revile God? Why does he say to himself, "He won't call me to account"? But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless. Break the arm of the wicked and evil man; call him to account for his wickedness that would not be found out.

A last word: A confession of truth. The LORD is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from his land. You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.

B. Psalm 51

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, ... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow ... renew a right spirit within me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation.

Speak to Others More Openly, Speak from Your Heart

- Share your sorrows

Who are trustworthy people?
Ask for prayer.

- Share your joys

Invite and Know Others

- Be Interested

- Pursue

- Know their heart

- Know what not to say and what to say

“That happened to me” v. “tell me more”

Silence v. “I’m so sorry” “you have been on my heart”
“here is how I am praying for you”

“At least”

C.S.Lewis - “Just don’t tell me it’s all for the best.”

Advice. “Just”

- Remember

- Pursue

God Speaks to Your Heart

Fear, shame, and depression, with nonlethal self-harm

What to expect

I. "Let's talk" (e.g., Ex 32)

II. God's words should sound good

Ex 34:6-7 "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

Is 41:13 For I, the LORD your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you."

III. Let him have the last word

God speaks to the Fearful and Anxious (and stressed, burnt out, PTSD)

Three things God says:

1. "Talk to me" (Ps 56:3)

2. "I am close" (Phil 4:5-6)

3. "I worry about tomorrow; you have grace for today"

The opposite of fear and anxiety:

- know love
- grow in trust
- take courage to carry out our duty

God Speaks to the Shamed

Shame is the deep sense that you are unacceptable – before God and people - because of something you did or something done to you. You feel exposed, humiliated and inferior.

I. “Talk to me”

II. “Listen to a story”

Watch for the Lord coming close to the poor, widow, barren, disabled (blind, lame) and weak.

Watch for people made holy, clothed, glorious, “mine,” rich, strong, radiant, crowned, with heads lifted up.

A. Eden’s priests

B. God’s preference for the lesser

C. From unclean, to clean, to holy (Lev 10:10)

D. A meal with God (Ex 12, Isa 55)

E. God’s Blessing (Nu 6)

F. New clothes (Ex 28, Isa 61:10-11, Zech 3)

G. Being associated with the right person

(Ps 34:5 - those who look to him are radiant, faces never covered with shame)

H. Jesus only pursues outsiders (Luke 4:18-19, Is 61:1-2; Luke 6:20-22)

- A meal with God (Matt 9:11)
- Samaritans (John 4)
- Two unclean women (Luke 7-8)
- A disgraced apostle (John 21)

I. Jesus is God's house

Those who come to me I will never turn away (John 6:37)

J. Paul reflects on all this.

- Jesus took on shame and despised it (Heb 12:1)
- We are united with him.
- We are weak, and we boast. (1 Cor 1:26-27)

K. And you, you are a priest (a saint), we are a tabernacle (1 Pet 2:9)

“Come near.” Progressive nearness

“Go out”

God Speaks to the Depressed, Numb, Barely Alive, Empty

I. Find words, speak them

Spurgeon,

“You may be surrounded with all the comforts of life, and yet be in wretchedness more gloomy than death if the spirits be depressed. You may have no outward cause whatever for sorrow, and yet in the mind be dejected, the brightest sunshine will not relieve your gloom. At such time you are vexed with cares, haunted with dreams, and scared with thoughts which distract you. You fear that your sins are not pardoned, that your past transgressions are brought to remembrance, and that punishment is being meted out to you in full measure.” *Bright Days, Dark Nights*, 69.

II. What happened? Listen for a story.

III. God speaks

- His credentials
- His credibility
- His promise
- Today

IV. When in doubt, confess

V. Keep talking

- Anger-complaining
- Guilt
- Shame and victimization that feels like guilt
- Failure
- Fear
- Loss

VI. Talk about death

VII. Today