

JourneyMates

Spiritual Practice of Transformational Giving

As JourneyMates, we believe that God can use spiritual disciplines such as silence, solitude, Lectio Divina, and Examen in our lives as tools for transformation. God can also use the discipline of giving of our gifts of time, talent and treasure as a means of growth in our lives, in the lives of those around us, and outward to the world. As such, we encourage you to open some time and space to be with God in the Spiritual Practice of Transformational Giving and invite you to use the following JourneyMates resource as you do.

Transformational Giving as a Spiritual Practice

We say the same thing again and again in JourneyMates, *our lives flourish and are transformed as we seek to be present to our own inner life, as we seek to be present to God, and as we seek to be present outwardly, to those in the world around us.* In each of these realms, we practice prayerful presence and attentiveness, learning to be truly involved (not simply bystanders). We practice telling the truth – being authentic and honest about what we are noticing. This upward-inward-among-outward life becomes a means of transformation as the Holy Spirit works in each of these realms, allowing us to trust God more and more in all of life.

Spiritual practices in this upward-inward-among-outward life become a way of focusing our attention and shaping our choices. For example—practicing undistracted silence for a period of time each day or week helps us to notice what is going on in us. That is the inward journey. It opens up space for us to hear how God is using his Word, his creation and our own hearts (Psalm 19) to speak into our lives. That's the upward journey. Finally, the practice of silence helps our own hearts to settle down, and from that quieted place we can better notice what is going on with other people. We aren't simply reactive out of our own struggles or busy-ness. That is the outward journey.

Like the discipline of silence, the spiritual practice of transformational giving also engages the four movements of the soul. Consider the inward movement of giving in the life of the farmer Ornan who offered to give King David part of his property as a place to build the temple. (1 Chronicles 21:18-30) King David insisted on paying for the land. Why? "I will not take for the Lord what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing." David had an inward awareness that guided him: unless he offered to pay for the land that would host the ark and eventually the temple, and that unless he paid Ornan for the wood and the oxen to sacrifice, he had short-changed his own soul. CS Lewis says that the percentage of what we give to the Lord and his work is not a set percentage of what we own or earn, but an amount that changes our options for how we live, spend, and conduct our lives. That sort of giving demands an attentive honesty about our own lives.

Second, let's consider the outward aspects of the discipline of giving. **Many more asks come our way than we can ever meet in this world. We are aware of more needs than we can even list or remember. How are we to discern where to offer our time and treasure and talents?** The outward journey of transformational giving asks us to be present to the world around us as we are able to see it, to the integrity of an organization that calls for our giving, and to the way we could play a part in that church or organization's mission.

Third, every true act of giving involves the upward movement of our lives. Christian giving at its heart is worship. Go back to David's words—He knew that buying Ornan's threshing floor and wood and oxen was an offering he was making to God. He was not simply making preparations

for constructing the temple. True spiritual giving flow from a heart of worship, not from a life pressured by guilt, other people, the greatness of the need, or a desire to gain status with an organization by our giving.

So how do you practice the spiritual discipline of giving?

- ❖ **First** - We take time to make an inward journey. Do an Examen of your life as it is. Be honest about your time, your treasure and your talents. Be honest about how you spend these resources –make real and concrete lists of how you actually live your life. Evaluate without self-judgment what you notice. Who do you desire to be? This sort of Examen is part of the inward journey.
- ❖ **Second** - We become attentive to the outward world: the needs around you, the opportunities that you are present to and are presented with. What do you deeply care to see happen in this world for the sake of Christ and his kingdom in this world? What geographic areas of the world draw your attention and compassion? What needs, causes or organizations have the ring of integrity and seem to operate with Godly goals, principles and leadership? Where have you noticed impact in your life and lives of others locally, nationally, and globally?
- ❖ **Third** - Return again to your inward journey and the practice of Examen. As you place all your giving options and resources before God, where do you have a sense of Consolation? Desolation? Freedom? Bondage? Where do you feel guilt or pressure? Where do you sense an invitation from God, a desire to give abundantly of your time, talent or finances, even if it seems sacrificial and moves you out of living safely? What do you notice in your own heart and discernment? Offer your awareness to God. Notice shifts and changes in your awareness.
- ❖ **Fourth** - Set aside time for the upward movement of your heart. Spend time praying about all you are noticing. Be silent with God. Listen for his promptings. Take as long as you need. What course of action in this world is he inviting you into as you offer up to him your time, talent and treasures?
- ❖ **Fifth** - From what you have noticed, discerned and prayed over, give freely as a worship offering as your Father leads you. You may want to use the following prayer by Saint Francis to guide you pray.

Giving Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O God, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

“Everyone should give whatever they have decided in their heart. They shouldn’t give with hesitation or because of pressure. God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7.