

THE GIFT OF BEING YOURSELF// Chapter 3

The First Steps Toward Knowing Yourself

'For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb.' Psalm 139:13

Prayer is meeting God in the darkness and solitude of the secret place....nothing less will provide ACCESS to the deep knowing of both God and self that is our true home. Benner P. 56



PRAYING WITH MY HEAD

READ David Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself* Chapter 3 (p. 45-56)

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER & JOURNAL:

'I am convinced that God loves each of us with depth, persistence and intensity beyond our imagination.' Benner p. 46

'God loves you with a passionate absorbed interest' Hannah Hurnard. How do you respond to these statements?

How could meeting God in the vulnerability of your present realities help you better know the *you* that God sees when God looks at you?

Read the section 'Knowing your ignored part-selves' p 50-51 Think back through your childhood and different stages of life and different contexts/roles – try and name some of your 'different selves' and identify some parts of your shadow-self.

PRAYING WITH MY HEART

Gospel Gazing Prayerful imagination and meditation on a Gospel encounter – this week with Peter. Read Benner's comment on Peter p53-54 Use the Ignatian form of imaginative contemplation outlined in the previous week.

Slow down. Sit in a comfortable place. Slow your breathing and centre yourself in the abiding presence of Christ.

Mark 14: 27-31 and 66-72

Read the passage slowly a couple of times inviting the Holy Spirit to bring it alive in your imagination. You may want to read the whole chapter to gain a sense of the flow and the highly emotive events taking place. Peter is in the middle of an unfolding nightmare, what emotions will he be experiencing as the authorities close in and Jesus is arrested?

Compose the scene in the High Priest's courtyard, the kind of building, the atmosphere, the soldiers and servants milling around...Pay attention to the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the night and the high drama that is unfolding.

Run the story like a movie scene. Lose yourself in the story; don't worry if your imagination is running too wild, see what happens (even if it goes beyond what is recorded in the Gospel).

At some point, place yourself in the scene – you could be a bystander or Peter himself.

The aim of this imaginative contemplation is to encounter the shadow self as we share in Peter's experience of denying the Lord he loves so much.

After the encounter has unfolded, try to imagine sitting down with Jesus to talk with him about what happened. (You could turn to John 21 to read the end of the story – but this would be worth another whole time of prayer and you may want to save it for after Easter!)

PRAYING WITH AN IMAGE – Visio Divina

– Real Me by Seiger Koder

Spend some time gazing at the picture over the page, allow your gaze to wander and notice all the little details of the picture.

What do you feel as you look at this person? What questions would you like to ask them?

The artist gives an insight into three parts of this person:

- there is the mask, the face that they show to the world,
- there is the private self behind the mask
- and there in the background is the shadow self.

Spend some time talking to God about the masks that you wear, your outer projections, the way you like people to see me. Name these things as clearly as you can.

Spend some time talking to God about the private you behind the mask. Who am you when no one is looking? How do you feel about yourself? Name these things as clearly as you can.

How do you feel that God looks upon the private you? Talk to God about this.

Finally, spend some time asking God about your shadow self. This is harder to locate; it is mostly hidden. Are there times when your reactions surprise you and you say, 'where did that come from?!' -that might be your shadow talking. Are there feelings or thoughts that you always push away, but keep coming back? This might show you something in your shadow.

Enter into a conversation with the Lord about what you have noticed...and how you might find aspects of yourself reflected in the person in the picture.

Love is here, Love is not afraid to see the real...Love invites you to neglect your shadow no longer...

Now, says the Lord, 'let us befriend your shadow...there is no need to hide, let us welcome the fears, doubts and shame...let us put our arms around them all.

Bring me your whole self...your real self....every part of you is what I want.'

PRAYING WITH MY HANDS Try painting your own version of the Clown