

During the Quarter | Retreat 1

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership:
An Invitation to Transforming Community

*One can begin one's [spiritual] quest by attending to the desires of the heart, both personal and communal...Desire functions as the fuel that drives the whole spiritual journey...
How much do we want holiness for ourselves and others?
How brightly burns the flame of desire for a love affair with God, other persons and the world?
Do we know that to desire and seek God is a choice that is always available to us?*
—ELIZABETH DREYER, *Earth Crammed with Heaven*

REST AND RETREAT

Fatigue is one of the greatest deterrents to being alert and present with God in ways that are life-transforming. We will be addressing issues of rest and depletion in different ways throughout the *Transforming Community*® experience, but begin now to notice where you are on the continuum of being rested/refreshed, good-tired and dangerously-tired. Notice how your levels of rest and depletion affect the quality of your presence with God and others. Begin to identify symptoms and sources of spiritual exhaustion in your own life and ask God “What are we going to do about that?” Pay attention to how much rest you need to be awake and alert in your life. Adjust your patterns of work and rest to meet your need.

It might also be helpful to reflect on the quality of your resting while on retreat and what was different for you. Begin noticing the significance of retreat as spiritual practice.

SOLITUDE: ATTENDING TO YOUR DESIRE

During this quarter, spend time listening to your desire as Jesus invites us to do in Scripture.

John 1:38

Matthew 20:29-34

Mark 10:46-52

Matthew 20:20-28

Mark 10:35-40

John 5:6-16

- Where do you find yourself in these Biblical stories?
- Can you hear Jesus' invitation *to you* to express your desire directly to him?
- Where do you find yourself resisting this question? How do you respond to him when he asks?

Remember that there are presenting/surface desires, which are often a cover for the deeper desires underneath the surface. Do not rush this question; rather allow plenty of time for the layers to be stripped away to reveal the truest desire of your heart—the desire that God longs to meet (Psalm 37:3, 4).

Reflect on Matthew 13:44, 45 as it relates to your desire for a way of life that results in authentic spiritual transformation. What are you willing to give in order to find this life? Wrestle with the question of “*How will I arrange my life for what my heart wants most?*”

SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP/SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Begin praying and being alert to the possibilities for a spiritual friend or a spiritual director that could provide spiritual companionship for you in your setting during this process. We will be teaching more about the nature and function of these relationships as we go along.



SPIRITUAL READINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Read or re-read Prologue and Chapters 1, 9 and 11 in *Invitation to a Journey*, noticing places of resonance and resistance, questioning and clarity for you.

How do you respond to the paragraph on the bottom of p. 32 (pg. 26, 1993 edition) which states “the issue of control is a crucial part of our spiritual pilgrimage. As long as I can set the limits on its pace and direction, I have no problem. What I do have a problem with is getting my control structures out of the way of my spiritual formation and letting God take control.”

How is your “desire to control” manifesting itself in your spiritual life these days? Where do you sense God inviting you to give up control and yield yourself to God’s transforming work?

What is the deeper desire that is underneath the desire to control? Continue to find your place in the stories where Christ interacts with people about their desire. Do not push past where you are in the story, but enter into the interaction and allow it to unfold between you and Christ. Don’t try to fix, just notice.

REQUIRED READINGS

REQUIRED – PRE-READING

- *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, M. Robert Mulholland
- *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*, Bradley Holt

TRANSFORMING RESOURCES THAT CONTAIN TEACHINGS FROM THIS RETREAT

- *Life Together in Christ*, Ruth Haley Barton (Introduction and Chapters 1&2)
- *Sacred Rhythms*, Ruth Haley Barton (Introduction and Chapter 1)
- *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, Ruth Haley Barton (Introduction and Chapter 1)

REQUIRED

- *Invitation to Retreat*, Ruth Haley Barton
- *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Choose one:
 - *Befriending Our Desires*, Philip Sheldrake
 - *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser
- Choose one:
 - *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*, Barbara A. Holmes
 - *In the Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen

FOR RECOMMENDED READINGS

- visit Transforming Resources while on retreat
- or go to www.transformingcenter.org/tc20
- See list on final page of this document

Please note: the Transforming Center does not endorse every idea of every author, however, many writings are important for us to interact with while, like the Bereans, we search the Scriptures to see if these things are so.



WRITTEN REFLECTIONS

To assist you in engaging the required readings, prepare a 2-3 page written reflection *in response to the readings* using the following questions as a guide:

- What was the desire that you began articulating while on retreat?
- How are you experiencing your desire these days? Has it intensified, lost intensity, stayed the same?
- What choices or changes have you made in response to clarifying your desire? What new rhythms have you explored that enable you to live in ways that are more congruent with your heart's desire?
- How have you experienced God with you and for you in the midst of your desire?
- What questions or challenges have arisen for you in the context of your reading and exploration?

Email reflections to tc20papers@transformingcenter.org no later than the Friday prior to the next retreat.

- Format is important.
- Not everyone has the same software, so please save your file with the extension .doc (Word file).
- Save/name the file: TC20, LAST NAME, RP (reflection paper)/retreat # you are writing about, and the date you are emailing the paper - EX: TC20JonesRP1Sept8
- On the first page of your paper include **only, 1)** retreat name, **2)** your name, **3)** date submitted, and **4)** list of required books that you read during the quarter.
- The subject of your email should be the same as your document name – TC20JonesRP1Sept8 then attach your reflection paper to send.

Papers will be read by a reader assigned to you and emailed to you with a personal response intended to encourage you in what you are processing with God. The person who reads your paper will companion you for the two years and will keep things fully confidential. (Note: You might not get your first paper back before the second retreat.)

RECOMMENDED READINGS

- *Concerning the Inner Life*, Evelyn Underhill
- *Holy Listening*, Margaret Guenther
- *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas a Kempis and Edythe Draper
- *Leaving Church*, Barbara Brown Taylor
- *The Making of An Ordinary Saint: My Journey from Frustration to Joy with the Spiritual Disciplines*, Nathan Foster
- *Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard
- *Wilderness Time*, Emilie Griffin
- *The Inward Journey*, Howard Thurman
- *Tokens of Trust*, Rowan Williams

For books that are out of print, try Amazon Kindle, Amazon used books, Alibris.com or your local library. For seminary students: If there is a discrepancy between the reading list above and the syllabus, please follow the syllabus.

