



Dying to Self, Living to God

We pray this resource might be a help in your desire to grow spiritually.

Settle into a quiet space. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct your attention. Listen to your own thoughts, and new ideas that may come. You may want to journal. May God's grace surround and guide you.

1. Pray

You may want to use this prayer or begin with your own words.

"Dear God, I am so afraid to open my clenched fists! Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to? Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands? Please help me to gradually open my hands and to discover that I am not what I own, but what you want to give me." *Henri Nouwen*

2. Consider

In order to discover who we were meant to be in Christ, we must uncover our real selves from the mix of accumulated coping mechanisms, patterns, beliefs, and self-protective ways we have used to get through life. These strategies do not make us "bad." They mean we are human. We try, each in our own way, to satisfy genuine needs for safety, security, esteem, affection, agency, and love.

All of these, we receive fully in God. We were meant to be fulfilled by God in all these ways, because He created us each to live in the freedom and expression of our individual Belovedness.

But because of a fallen world, we are shaped by experiences of brokenness. We develop beliefs and behaviors that depend on broken self-dependent systems to meet our needs. We build identities meant to satisfy what can only be completely satisfied in God alone.

These false identities must die in order for our true selves, our God-identities, to come more and more into the light and shine into the world. This is God's intention for us. One avenue of His transforming work of redeeming and sanctifying us can come through a process of letting go. We can call this process Renunciation, or Detachment, or Releasing.

Here are some helpful practices as you engage in this spiritual work.

3. Open to God.

Open your hands and ask God what it is He wants you to notice. Give Him permission to reveal information to you that may be hidden from you. Ask Him to help you admit

things that you may already know but find hard to face. Some of these questions may be helpful. Ask yourself, with the Spirit's help:

Is there anything that has become the center of my attention?

Do I have emotions or thoughts that are frequent or strong? What might those be telling me about my focus?

Who am I relying on? How are others controlling the narrative of my life? How am I "running my own show?" Where is God's voice in all this?

Is there something in my life I cannot live without? Ask God about how this may be an attachment or a "disordered" love. Ask Him to help you notice, without shame or guilt, why this is so.

4. Allow God's presence to come into the things you notice.

Gently invite Him to come into whatever has come to mind. Or into whatever emotion has arisen. Or into the tension or discomfort of your body. Ask Jesus to give you His assurance of His love and mercy. Is there a Scripture that comes to mind? Receive what it is God wants to give.

5. Name what it is that you are noticing.

Form words that express what it is that is between you and God... how is it that you are depending on or wanting something other than God to give you what you want. Do you need to confess? Do you need to write it down, or say to someone else what it is you are struggling with? Releasing our attachments is hard work and we may need supportive friends and spiritual community.

6. Practice Detachment

Hold your hands palms down and ask what it is God wants you to let go of. Pray about releasing outcomes of your circumstances and situations to God. Breathe deeply and let yourself relax into God's careful faithfulness. He knows.

7. Continue in Trust

What Scriptures have come to mind, or what has God surfaced? Are there promises or steps to take? Remind yourself that God desires relationship, not simply behavior. The process of detachment is about building trust and intimacy with Him, far more than about performing, or trying harder. How is He assuring you? How do you sense His presence? How will you rely on His goodness and not yourself?

8. Prayer

End with prayer that places this ongoing work into God's hands. Thank Him that you are His Beloved. Listen for His assurance.