Week 5

Leaving Self Behind – Meditation and Discipleship

*In learning to say the mantra we learn to let go of all our ideas, plans, thought processes, and even of our self-consciousness. [[1]](#footnote-1)*

Welcome and introductions

Welcome everyone back. Introduce everyone if there are newcomers. Briefly review last week’s talk.

Jesus said ‘Anyone who wishes to be a follower of mine must leave self behind.’ When we meditate we follow the fundamental call that Jesus makes and that is the basis of Christian discipleship. Saying the mantra is a discipline that helps us transcend all limitations. Meditation leads us into an experience of liberty at the centre of our being where the Spirit dwells and welcomes us into her embrace.

**The Talk**

Either:-

* + - Play Track 5 Leaving Self Behind – 7.41 mins.

Downloaded from the Website

(Taken from:12 Talks For Meditators, Dom John Main, Track 6)

or

* + - Give a talk using the notes.

Meditation

Prepare for meditation use the instructions How to Meditateat the end of Chapter 3.

Say the Opening Prayer at the end of Chapter 3.

Meditation: 20 – 25 minutes.

Reading

We must first come near to ourselves by finding our own true Self. But we have still to learn to enter into the paradox that Jesus has put before us: “the person who would find his life must first lose it”. Meditation is the prayer of faith because we are willing to follow the teacher’s command: we are willing to lose our lives so that we may realise fully our own potential. *John Main.*

*Or*

Scripture: Matthew 7:13

Sharing and questions

Offer the opportunity for participants to ask questions. See if there are any questions about the mantra or how to say it. Let them share their daily practice and feelings.

If there are any newcomers provide information about The World Community for Christian Meditation – handout brochures, newsletter and other material, provide details of the website as a way of helping them strengthen their daily discipline.

Recommend Laurence Freeman’s book, *The* *Selfless Self.*

Conclusion

Conclude with the Community Prayer at the end of Chapter 3.

**Talk Five**

**Leaving Self Behind**

Jesus said ‘Anyone who wishes to be a follower of mine must leave self behind.’ A disciple is one who learns (the Latin *discere* means to learn) and learning requires discipline.

We meditate to follow the basic call of Jesus which is also the basis of Christian faith – to leave self behind so that we can journey with Christ in his return to the Father in fellowship with humanity and the universe.

Saying the mantra is a discipline that helps us transcend all the limitations of fear and illusion. Meditation leads into an experience of liberty from all the distortions of the ego where, at the centre of our being, the Spirit dwells in love. The freedom to ‘love is the greatest liberty’.

Where the Spirit is, there is liberty (*2 Cor 3:17*)

The mantra introduces us to this liberty by helping us pass over to ‘the other’. We move from ourselves to God in this way. It does so by helping us to continuously take our attention off ourselves. This gives an experiential meaning of leaving self behind.

This is not an experience many modern people are familiar with or even understand clearly in a culture that nurtures self-fixation. The tendency of our society is to emphasize the importance of self-promotion, self-preservation, self-projection. Even with regards to meditation we think first of what we can gain from it rather than what we may lose or transcend.

The materialism of our society puts ‘what I want’ at the centre of our life. It can render ‘the other’ (even God) merely an object that we see in terms of our own pleasure or advantage. ’The other’ is only really when approached with reverence for itself.

In learning to meditate we learn that essentially meditation is always a learning process. We learn to pay complete attention to the mantra and not to monitoring its effect on us. The more self-conscious we are the more we begin to objectify God. Then God’s reality, uniqueness and central value escapes us and God becomes merely a projection of ourselves.

We can never know God as an object but only sharing in God’s own self-knowledge. (St Irenaeus)

Many people confuse self-renunciation with self-rejection or escapism but meditation is not running away from ourself or life. It is not an attempt to avoid responsibility of our own life and our relationships.

Meditation is rather an affirmation of ourselves. Not the self that wants this or that – these aspects of ourself are illusory and can become little egos when they become isolated from the central point of our being. The centre is where our self exists in complete harmony with God (‘the other’). This why meditation is called the ‘prayer of the heart’.

God is the source of our being and the sustainer of our selfhood. It is this whole or real self that we affirm and discover in the silence of meditation. We cannot get it by force (“trying to lay violent hands on it”) or by trying to possess or control it.

If we try to do this by force we are in the absurd position of the ego trying to command the self, or unreality dictating to reality, or the tail wagging the dog. In meditation we affirm ourselves by becoming still, and silent and allowing the reality of our real self to become more and more apparent and to diffuse its light within our whole being.

In the course of this natural process of spiritual growth we do not try to *do* anything, we simply let ourselves be. When we are leaving self behind we are in that condition of liberty and receptivity (poverty of spirit and purity of heart) that allows us to be in relationship with God. This is the condition that makes it possible for us to experience God’s personal and unique love for us.

We can only make this movement of self if we leave self behind. That is if we take our attention away from its involvement with ‘me’and direct it on the other.

This experience in meditation itself then becomes the norm throughout our life.

Self-obsession restricts and limits the self. Self-renunciation, on the other hand, is the means of liberating the self for its real purpose which is loving God. Meditation is a simple and natural process. It is the process that reveals our real being as a state of openhearted receptivity to the spirit of Jesus who dwells in our hearts.

This revelation dawns when we step aside from the ‘external’ manifestations of consciousness such as thoughts, words and images. The less self-conscious we are the more we move into pure consciousness itself.

We then become silent because we have entered silence and we are wholly turned towards the other. In this fully conscious, fully free silence we naturally open ourselves to the Word that proceeds from the silence.

This is God’s own Word in whom we are called into being, in which we ourselves are spoken by our creator. This is the living Word within us. Faith tells us that we are wholly incorporate in this Word, and that we need to know it fully in the height, length, breadth and depth of our spirit; and know it though it is beyond knowledge.

The silence of meditation brings us to this knowledge which is so simple that no thought or image could ever contain or represent it. By renouncing self we enter the silence and focus on the other. The truth to be revealed in this is the harmony of our self with God - and so with all.

*Based On: 12 Talks For Meditators, Dom John Main, Track 6*

*A similar talk can be downloaded from the website Talk 5.*

1. The Way of Unknowing page 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)