

JUNE 2018

# CAPTIVATING Thoughts

## Cycle of Striving Arrested *by Leslie, Water Lily*

Sometimes I find myself in an un-healthy cycle. I am never sure when or how it started. All I know is that I become aware of a negative attitude, judgmental thoughts, or unease. I am also aware that it usually involves me wanting someone or something to change. I feel desperate. I try everything I can think of, getting frustrated, complaining, and then starting over... not very productive and very damaging to those who have to live with me.

I have learned that suddenly "becoming aware" of an unhealthy cycle is an invitation by Holy Spirit to take a look at my heart. He is always so faithful to bring me to my senses, often through a painful circumstance that I have found myself in. He offers me the choice to continue down the road of striving, or to run back to Him.

This is where the beauty of walking with God really happens for me.

I have learned to love repentance. My process usually goes something like this. I get alone with Jesus, feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders, stomach in knots, and usually embarrassed that I am back in this place. I lay the mess I have made out before Him (He already knows) making sure I take

responsibility for my part and I ask for forgiveness.

1 John 1:9 says, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

The last step, I think is the most important. I ask for the purification. If I simply ask forgiveness and stop there I will likely end up in the same cycle again. I need His eyes on my life, His intervention. He loves to be asked! So I do that, I ask Him what is needed. How did I get into this cycle? Was it sin? Did I make an agreement? Is there something in my heart that needs to be healed? Then I listen. I never assume that I know the answer. Then I cooperate with where He leads. I invite Him to heal this place in my heart and to make me righteous here, in this place. There is never any harshness from Him, just love and care for me.

I leave these encounters feeling refreshed. The weight that I was feeling is lifted and I have a greater clarity. I also leave with and increased faith and deep sense that I am seen, loved, and cared for by a Good Father who delights in me. I invite you to give it a try...♥



I don't know about you, but my month has been full! A "pressed down, shaken together, and running over" kind of month. I'd like to tell you it was overflowing with blessings (well the truth is it was!) but it was also overflowing with stress, anxiety, discouragement, and overwhelm. What did I do with all that? Well, at first I entertained the thoughts, which opened the door for the matching feelings to walk right in, and then I looked for comfort.

That my friends is a recipe for one very sour "Self-Pity" pie! ...and I had served myself on really big slice!

The good news is I prefer "Victory Bread"! So, I broke off a big old piece and swallowed! I broke agreements with the lies I had entertained, spoke truth (Word) to my emotions, and worked on "union with Trinity"!

Life happens... we just don't have to open the door and invite it to camp out in our living room (heart)! PROVERBS 4:23

COACH ADAMS

## Dear Friends

By John Eldredge, Author

I write these letters, for the most part, to people who want to have a richer life with God. (A richer life period, which we know only flows out of a richer life with God.)

We want to draw closer and closer; it is the yearning and inclination of the soul that loves God. For "When Jesus is near," wrote a Kempis, "all is well and nothing seems difficult. When He is absent, all is hard. When Jesus does not speak within, all other comfort is empty, but if He says only a word, it brings great consolation." Thus our soul yearns for nearness.

But I think it yearns for something more—we yearn for union with God.

He is the Vine, the source of all our life, and we are but branches aching and thirsting to be united with the Vine, so that Life itself might flow through us. In the introduction to Albert Magnus' medieval classic, *Union with God*, the editor begins, "Surely the most deeply-rooted need of the human soul, its purest aspiration, is for the closest possible union with God." My soul says, Yes and amen. The closest possible union.

Now, when I look at the popular books, podcasts, sermons and conferences being offered right now in Christendom, I'm struck by how infrequently the topic is union with God. Either they are things to do: "This is how to help your kids grow in their faith," or, "Do this for your community to share the love of Christ," or, "Take action to bring justice to the world." Or they are inspiration: "Be a better you! Live a braver life! You too can overcome!" There is a place for these things, of course, but I think they are misleading, because something else is needed first. Our energy and vitality, our strength and endurance, all the virtues like patience, loving-kindness, and forgiveness—these all flow out of our union with God. When the soul tries to produce

any of these things on its own, it tires very easily. "We are vessels of life," wrote MacDonald, "not yet full of the wine of life; where the wine does not reach, there the clay cracks, and aches, and is distressed."

So you would think our primary goal—and thus topic of conversation—would be union with God.

*"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you...one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me."* (John 17:20-23)

This is not quite the same thing as saying we believe in God, or that we are listening to God; not even that we are obeying God. Union, oneness, is something far higher and richer. I realize that in this abused age any sexual metaphor is potentially troubling, but the scripture uses it and therefore we should not abandon it. Referring directly to marriage Paul says, "For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies...she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man...you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God." (Romans 7:2-4 NASB)

And now you are united with the one who was raised from the dead. (NLT)

It's simply helpful to differentiate: believing in God is not the same thing as union with God, doing various God-activities is not the same as union with God, obeying God isn't necessarily union with God. These things can all be done while there is a kind of distance between our soul and God. You can read all about Italy but that is very different from actually living there. You can do things for your spouse but that's not the same as being united with them.

Okay then. What I want to suggest is, that the basic things we do, the things that are at the top of our "To Do" lists, are things that help us find union with God.

**Step 1** is understanding that God wants union with you, that union is the purpose of your creation, and that it is the priority. That's a good starting point. It is a massive re-orientation. Because it leads quickly to **Step 2**, which is presenting ourselves to God for union. I do this every day: "I present myself to You, God, for union with You." We pray for union; we ask for it.

**Step 3** (and this is not science, folks, it's poetry; these "steps" are simply for clarity's sake) is to release everything else that is taking up room in your soul. "I give everything and everyone to You for union with You." And then, I have found it very important to ask God to heal my union with him: "Father—I pray you would heal our union. I pray your glory would fill our union." This is critical because the enemy is always trying to harm our union with God, and it needs healing and repairing on a regular basis.

*Jesus, Father, Holy Spirit — I give myself to you to be one with you in everything. I pray for union and I pray for oneness. I pray to be one heart and one mind, one will, one life. Restore me in you; restore our union. I give everything and everyone to you in order to have union with you. Heal our union, God; restore and renew our union. I pray your glory fills our union. I pray for a deeper union with you, a deeper and more complete oneness.*

It is a very quiet and gentle thing. Sometimes dramatic, but maybe only about 5% of the time. Most of the time the union of our soul with God is something that is very gentle and life-giving. And therefore you have to be gentle and tuned-in to be aware of it. But I think you will love the fruit of this. So I thought it would be good to put this back in front of us as the priority for each day.

Offered in love,

John

**C2C** needs your feedback! If you received, or read, "Sexual Healing", by Crystal Sutherland, please write to us and share it's impact. -Coach

