

Chapter 1 "Gentle and Lowly" Journaling Questions

READ

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

REFLECT

"When the Bible speaks of the heart, whether Old Testament or New, it is not speaking of our emotional life only but of the central animating center of all we do. It is what gets us out of bed in the morning and what we daydream about as we drift off to sleep. It is our motivation headquarters. The heart, in biblical terms, is not part of who we are but the center of who we are. Our heart is what defines and directs us." (p.18)

People are complex— think about your life and motivations: What motivates you to go to work? To care for responsibilities around the house? To learn new things?

Since everyone has a variety of heart-level motivations, some good and some bad, how do you think this affects your understanding of Christ's heart toward you?

"Gentle" is the same word as translated "meek" in Matthew 5:5, "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." One theological dictionary defines a person who is meek as: "One who feels that he is a servant in relationship to God and who subjects himself to Him quietly and without resistance."¹

How does understanding meekness and gentleness cause you to see how much he humbled himself at the incarnation? How does this humility of Christ help re-define his gentleness in your thinking?

"The point in saying that Jesus is lowly is that he is accessible. For all his resplendent glory and dazzling holiness, his supreme uniqueness and otherness, no one in human history has ever been more approachable than Jesus Christ. No prerequisites. No hoops to jump through."

If God owed people nothing because of their sin against him, how does the fact that God the Son came demonstrating that he is gentle and lowly cause you to feel drawn to him and invited toward him?

"You don't need to unburden or collect yourself and then come to Jesus. Your very burden is what qualifies you to come. No payment is required; he says, "I will give you rest." His rest is gift, not transaction. Whether you are actively working hard to crowbar your life into smoothness ("labor") or passively finding yourself weighed down by something outside your control ("heavy laden"), Jesus Christ's desire that you find rest, that you come in out of the storm, outstrips even your own."(p.20-21)

"He astounds and sustains us with his endless kindness. Only as we walk ever deeper into this tender kindness can we live the Christian life as the New Testament calls us to."

Do you ever feel that your burdens and difficulties repel you from Christ and cause him to turn his face away from you?

Write

Is it difficult for you to believe that Jesus willingly invited you toward him? Why?

What might be some preconceptions of the heart of God in Christ that you have thought about from natural intuition?

In what ways does thinking about the heart of Christ invite you toward him today?

Pray

Father, help me to believe that Jesus loves me and is not repelled or disgusted by my repeated failings. Help me to see his heart toward me—not how I would imagine I would respond to myself. Remind me afresh today that the cross was a reflection of his heart toward sinners so that I might walk in freedom.

¹ Hauck and Schulz TDNT, p.647