

## How is it with your soul? Soul Training Practices

---

October 20, 2016

Dr. Bruce Hekman, hollandpilgrim70@gmail.com

The quotations and Soul Training practices that follow are mostly taken from Ruth Haley Baron's book *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*.

I encourage you to take time alone to pay attention to the soul of your teaching/leading.

“Strengthening the soul of your leadership is an invitation to enter more deeply into the process of spiritual transformation and to choose to lead from that place.”

“Those who are looking to us for spiritual sustenance need us first and foremost to be spiritual seekers ourselves.” Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*.

“Although the discipline of solitude asks us to set aside time and space, what finally matters is that our hearts become like quiet cells where God can dwell, wherever we go and whatever we do. The more we train ourselves to spend time with God and God alone, the more we will discover that God is with us at all times and in all places. Then we will be able to recognize God even in the midst of a busy and active life. Once the solitude of time and place has become a solitude of the heart, we will never have to leave that solitude. We will be able to live the spiritual life in any place and any time. Thus the discipline of solitude enables us to live active lives in the world, while remaining always in the presence of the living God.” (Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*)

October 20, 2016

“Silence means rest, rest of body and mind, in which we become available for God. This is very threatening. It is like giving up control over our actions and thoughts, allowing something creative to happen not by us but to us. Is it so amazing that we are so often tired and exhausted, trying to be masters of ourselves, wanting to grasp the ultimate meaning of our existence, struggling with our identity? Silence is that moment in which we not only stop the discussion with others but also the inner discussions with ourselves, in which we can breathe freely and accept our identity as a gift. “Not I live, but He lives in me.” It is in this silence that the Spirit of God can pray in us and continue its creative work in us. . . Without silence the Spirit will die in us and the creative energy of our life will float away and leave us alone, cold and tired. Without silence we will lose our center and become victims of the many who constantly demand our attention.” (Henri Nouwen, Training for the Campus Ministry)

## **Soul Training**

**1. Finding Ourselves:** After resting in God’s presence, invite him to help you start seeing and naming the experiences that have shaped you. What are the patterns *underneath* the behaviors and situations that are disturbing to you at this time? Invite God to guide you to discover those areas that are important for you to see at this stage of your life and ministry.

*Prayer* “O God, gather me to be with you as you are with me. Keep me in touch with myself, with my needs,

## How is it with your soul? Soul Training Practices

---

October 20, 2016

Dr. Bruce Hekman, hollandpilgrim70@gmail.com

my anxieties, my angers, my pains, my corruptions.  
Deepen my wounds into wisdom; shape my weaknesses into compassion; gently my envy into enjoyment, my fear into trust.”

**2. Attentive and Attuned:** Take some time to pay attention to your life *as it is being given to you right now*. Be very specific about naming the gifts in it and be grateful.

*Prayer* “O God, let something essential and joyful happen in me now, something like the blooming of hope and faith, like a grateful heart, like a surge of awareness of how precious each moment is, that now, not next time, now is the occasion to take off my shoes, to see every bush afire, to lead and whirl with neighbor, to gulp air as sweet wine until I’ve drunk enough to dare speak the tender word: “Thank you” “I love you” “You’re beautiful”; “I’m a fool for Christ’s sake.”

**3. The Land Between:** When you’ve rested in God and feel ready, reflect on your personal spiritual life and your leadership. Have you reached a challenge or an impasse that defies human answers or where those around you are starting to panic? Is it possible that this is the place where God is calling you and those you are leading to be still and allow God to fight for you---or at least wait for his clear direction?

*Prayer:* “For the darkness of waiting, of not knowing what is to come, of staying ready and quiet and attentive, I praise you, O God; for the darkness and light are both

October 20, 2016

alike to you.

“ For the darkness of choosing when you give us the moment to speak, and act, and change, and we cannot know what we have set in motion, but we still have to take the risk, we praise you, O God; for the darkness and light and both alike to you.”

**4. Living within limits:** “What you are doing is not good. You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.” Exodus 18:17-18

Signs that you may be functioning beyond human limitations and without margin:

- Irritability or hypersensitivity
- Restlessness
- Compulsive overworking
- Emotional numbness
- Escapist behaviors
- Disconnected from our identify and calling
- Not able to attend to human needs
- Hoarding energy
- Slippage in our spiritual practices

Allow yourself to breathe deeply and to be at ease, to be attuned to the soft body of yourself---its limits, its needs, its tender places, its weariness, its vulnerability, its strength. Experience your finiteness and what it feels like to be a finite being in the presence of the infinite God.

Then ask God to help you notice where your leadership

## How is it with your soul? Soul Training Practices

---

October 20, 2016

Dr. Bruce Hekman, hollandpilgrim70@gmail.com

experience might be similar to Moses' and where you too, need to live within limits. Has your way of life become unmanageable to the extent that you have "sent your family away" in some fashion or have not been able to give your best to them or fully include them in your heart and life?

*Prayer:* " O Eternal one, it would be easier for me to pray if I were clear and of a single mind and pure heart, if could be done hiding from myself and from you, even in my prayers. But I am who I am, mixture of motives and excuses, blur of memories, quiver of hopes, knot of fear, tangle of confusion, and restless with love.... for love

Come find me, Lord. Be with me exactly as I am. Help me to find me, Lord. Help me accept what I am so I can begin to be yours."

**5. Abounding and Abiding: Sacred Rhythms** "One of the most important rhythms for a person in ministry is to establish a constant back-and-forth motion between engagement and retreat---times when we are engaged in the battle, giving our best energy to taking the next hill and times when we step back in order to gain perspective, restrategy and tend our wounds."

Use your time in solitude today to ask God to help you notice your own rhythms, or the lack of them: solitude and community; stillness and action; engagement and retreat; work and rest.

Notice any rhythms that you sense God inviting you to

October 20, 2016

experience that corresponds to an area of concern or need. Take a few moments to pay attention to your life, to notice without judging, and to listen for how God might be leading you.

*Prayer:* “O Lord, I recognize that one generation gives its life to the next. One season slips away so another can come. One crop of fruit falls from the tree so that more can be borne. One day ends in darkness so that another can begin with light.

Thank you for creating me with limits and for the Sabbath rest you have ordained for all creation. Forgive me for filling my life with so much activity that I can't attend to the exhaustion what is deeper than tiredness, the hunger that is more than food, the thirst for more than drink, the longing for comfort that is more than physical.

Help me find a rhythm in my life and my school, so that we can find our rest in you.”

Barton, Ruth Haley. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*. Downers Grove, IL; IVP. 2008