

The Relentless Tenderness of Jesus

Pre-amble Questions

Overall impressions of the book (rate 1-10)?

What were some of the things you most appreciated? Feel free to share a quote.

What was something you struggled or disagreed with? Feel free to share a quote.

Experiencing Jesus

1. Describe the God you believed in during your childhood and teenage years. Has anything changed in your perception of God, or are you still limping along with the understanding of God provided by your parents, pastors and your local faith community?
2. What has developed in your spiritual life since you were seized by the power of a great affection? Are you still clinging to that moment?
3. A Christian is always in the process of becoming one. Are you experiencing greater freedom from the bondage of human respect, people pleasing and craving the approval of others?
4. What does it mean to you to disappear into the tremendous poverty that is the adoration of God?

Jesus at Easter

1. A recent national survey revealed that a mere 9 per-cent of Christians in America evaluated the morality of the war in Iraq in light of the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The inscription on the bracelet, "What would Jesus do?" has virtually disappeared from Christian conversation. Does your identity in Christ influence your thinking about war? Is the principle of nonviolent resistance relevant in this era of terrorism? What are the alternatives?
2. Describe someone you know well whom you consider transparent. What are his or her qualities that you find so attractive?
3. Share what has helped you to remain aware of God's presence when the inevitable distractions of daily living pull you away. When you go to a movie, does Jesus stand outside on the sidewalk? When you step into a sailboat, does God stay ashore?
4. Commenting on the three temptations by Satan in the desert, Henri Nouwen wrote: "The three temptations were three ways to seduce Jesus into becoming a competitor for love. The world of the tempter was precisely that world in which people compete for love through doing useful, sensational and powerful things and so winning medals that gain them affection and admiration."⁹ Are you competing for love through acts of kindness and service, hoping to win affection and approval through your good deeds? In other words, are you doing the right thing for the

wrong reason?

Jesus at Christmas

1. Comment on the short paragraph "Jesus Christ mases in us . . ."
2. In the commentary on the parable of the sower and the seed, at which level do you place yourself? If level four, are you at 30, 60 or 100 percent?
3. If you have personally experienced Jesus Christ in your life, you qualify for the name tag "mystic," because the classic definition of mystic is a person who has experienced God. Shortly before his death in 1985, Karl Rahner prophesied, "In the days ahead, the Christian will either be a mystic or no Christian at all." Mystical experience is not a one-time thing. Do you agree or disagree with Rahner's statement? Are you comfortable with being called a mystic? Does your religious tradition use this term?
4. How do you understand these words: "A free person is judgment against our own fear of freedom"? Why is there so much unfreedom in religious circles today?