

To Ponder

Learning to Walk in the Dark

By Barbara Brown Taylor

There have never been a lot of people lining up to learn what God is NOT. The only people who are interested in what God is not are those who have run through all the other answers and found them wanting. Waking up in the middle of their own dark nights, they have come quickly to the end of their intellectual resources so there is nothing to do but lie in the dark with something heavy on their chests, listening for a voice in the darkness that does not come.

If that has ever happened to you, you know how fast it can make you ready to listen to anyone who can tell you what all that *not-ness* is about. John's answer is not simple, but in the simplest possible terms, he says that the dark night is God's best gift to you, intended for your liberation. It is about freeing you from your ideas about God, your fears about God, your attachment to all the benefits you have been promised for believing in God, your devotion to the spiritual practices that are supposed to make you feel closer to God, your dedication to believing all the right things about God, your positive and negative evaluations of yourself as a believer, your tactics for manipulating God, and your sure cures for doubting God.

All of these are substitutes for God, John says. They all get in God's way. Gerald May called them addictions. In many cases, he said, we should give thanks for them, because it is our addiction to some God substitute or another that finally brings us to our knees, by helping us realize how far we have strayed from our heart's true desire.

God puts out our lights to keep us safe, John says, because we are never more in danger of stumbling than when we think we know where we are going. When we can no longer see the path we are on, when we can no longer read the maps we have brought with us or sense anything in the dark that might tell us where we are, only then are we vulnerable to God's protection. This remains true even when we cannot discern God's presence. The only thing the dark night requires of us is to remain conscious. If we can stay with the moment in which God seems most absent, the night will do the rest.

Reading

Thoughts in Solitude

By Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself. And the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But, I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore, I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost
and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never
leave me to face my perils alone.

Sharing...

a word...

a phrase...

a reflection...



Song: Dante's Prayer

By Loreena McKennitt

When the dark wood fell before me
And all the paths were overgrown
When the priests of pride say
there is no other way
I tilled the sorrows of stone.

I did not believe because I could not see
Though you came to me in the night
When the dawn seemed forever lost
You showed me your love in the light of the stars.

Chorus
Cast your eyes on the ocean
Cast your soul to the sea
When the dark night seems endless
Please remember me.

Then the mountain rose before me
By the deep well of desire
From the fountain of forgiveness
Beyond the ice and the fire.

Chorus

Though we share this humble path, alone
How fragile is the heart
Oh give these clay feet wings to fly
To touch the face of the stars.

Breathe life into this feeble heart
Lift this mortal veil of fear
Take these crumbled hopes,
etched with tears
We'll rise above these earthly cares.

Chorus

Thank You For Joining Us!

Prayer Leader

Syndie Eardly **11/10/15**

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**When we can
no longer
see the path,
that's when
we are
vulnerable to
God's
presence**



Our prayer is characterized by silence
Be still and know that I am God!

In that silence we listen for a new word.
God is present in all our lives.
God cares for us, and
our life experiences are a source
of deepening knowledge of God and self.

Inspired by God's Word in the silence
we share from our hearts.