



Creating Inner Space

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Very often, our lives get so busy! Our outer lives are filled with work, carrying out projects, taking care of family and community needs. Our inner lives are often cluttered with anxieties, worries, plans for the future. We take little time to stop, look and listen to ourselves, to God, or to others. We often get caught up in only doing for others, and neglect the gift to just be with one another. In this article I reflect on the what, why, how, where and when of creating the inner space needed to be in touch with God and our deeper selves.

WHAT is this inner space?

It is interior freedom: a letting go of binding negative realities in order to make room for God and deeper values. It is emptiness: letting ourselves be emptied, to be poor in spirit. It is the kind of poverty Jesus experienced in emptying himself and becoming human because of his great love.

Our inner space is a resting place for God and others, a place where we can be and let ourselves receive God and others. It is God's home. As Jesus said, "The Father and I will make our home in you." What a profound truth: that God loves us so much as to make God's home within us.

As Meister Eckhart, a thirteenth century mystic and theologian, humorously points out:

God is at home in us. It is we who have gone out for a walk.

Through our interior freedom and emptiness we can come back home and be the resting place that God invites us to be.

WHY do we create this inner space?

In order to make room for God's vibrant presence, a presence that is rich, alive, simple, quiet, but very full. We empty our inner space so that we might experience the fullness of God's life in Jesus Christ. "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full."

We create space within in order to focus our hearts and minds on deeper values of the heart: being loving, sensitive, and caring. Creating inner space helps us approach life and others with an uncluttered and loving heart. We need to be uncluttered in order to really love others. If we are filled with ourselves and our own concerns, we are not free to love and care. Having this inner space enables us to be less self-absorbed and more absorbed in God and others.

HOW do we create this inner space?

Living in the Present

First, by living in the present moment. In our Western culture, we tend to live in our heads and in our future plans. We need to leave our thoughts for a while and notice things more through our sense and bodies. We need to look at, to listen to, to smell, to taste, and to touch what we are doing in a given moment. How often do we eat a meal and not really taste what we eat? How often do we walk along unaware of the beauty around us because we are lost in our thoughts? Being aware of our bodies and using our senses helps us to live in the present moment, clarifies our thinking when we move back into our heads, and empties us to notice God's presence in our lives.

Silence

Another way to create inner space is through silence. Silence is the great revelation because it reveals ourselves to ourselves. If we took five-minute blocks of stillness three or four times a day, we would become more aware of our concerns and anxieties, and therefore more free. Simple awareness through silence results in freedom. It is when we are unaware that we become self-absorbed and lose sight of God and deeper truths.

Pain

Pain is another way to create inner space. None of us likes suffering, but it is a part of our lives. Pain bores a hole deep inside us and enables us to be more open to God. If we can face our pain and not avoid it, feel it in its depth, let it empty us, let the sword pierce our hearts, then we will become freer to receive God.

Surrender

Surrendering to God is another way to create inner space. Daily we must turn over to God our compulsions and compulsive thinking. This conscious letting go of binding attitudes and of our false selves frees us to feel our feelings and enjoy our true selves. We must also put into God's hands each day the positive realities of our lives, realizing that "All is gift." In this way we make room to receive these gifts anew, particularly the gift of God's presence and love. As Meister Eckhart poignantly says: "God does not ask anything of you except that you let yourself go and let God be God in you."

WHERE do we create inner space?

In all places. Although we need times of solitude, we do not have to go into the desert to discover our inner space. We can find and create this space in our marketplace, within our homes, in our communities. In all relationships. A marvelous way to let intimacy grow is to sit in silence with another for a while, letting yourself be aware of the other person and your feelings toward him or her. This quiet presence with another opens us to share deeper feelings and inner truths, our inner spaces connect. In the Eastern world, people have a practice called "benevolent gazing," in which they silently look at one another for five minutes before a meeting. This gazing upon the other dissipates defensiveness and frees individuals to receive the ideas and feelings of the others.

WHEN do we create inner space?

Daily and constantly. Through constant awareness — observing what is around us and within us, letting things be without analyzing obsessively — we can experience our inner space each day. In special times of solitude as well as through longer periods of prayer, taking days of retreat away from the business of our lives, we can acquire a more focused attentiveness of God and spiritual realities.

In summation, what does this article say?

In sum, when we create inner space, we find God in all things. "The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw and knew all things in God and God in all things," says Mechtild of Magdeburg, another thirteenth century mystic. When we create inner space, we let God shine through us. Mechtild says again: "God, you are the sun, I am your reflection. When God shines we must reflect: Each of us is a mirror of eternal contemplation, with a reflection that is the living Son of God with all his works." When we have that emptied inner space we become a mirror of God, a reflection of God to others, radiating to all what we experience within.