

Please don't seek this experience, or any other. Instead seek the Lord. Praise Him. Worship and adore Him. The seeking of any experience with God can be a form of idolatry, putting something ahead of the Lord Himself.

However, simply being willing to let God empty you of yourself and fill you with Himself will bring blessing. The emptying, the becoming needy, hopeless, and helpless are still as much key to all our responses to Him as they were in chapter one. It will never change!

We're often told to surrender all to Jesus. So we try to do it as a choice, a decision generated by our own will-power, but we find ourselves disappointed. When we're emptied and broken-hearted, poor and needy, He has already effected the surrender.

We're told we must be humble, and we find we're anything but. When we're emptied and broken-hearted, poor and needy, humility is no longer something we seek but something we experience.

We're told to rest and be at peace. Instead we find ourselves troubled and distressed. When we're emptied and broken-heartedly dependent on Him alone, His peace and rest are ours.

When we're emptied of ourselves, our attention goes spontaneously to Him. Or is it more accurately, when our attention goes to Him, we're spontaneously emptied of ourselves? In either case, when He works His emptying, breaking, drawing work within, it's done! What He does, He does well.

Many Christians won't spend enough time alone with the Lord to have their hard hearts softened, made tender toward God, and brought to the place of surrender by His Spirit. They won't let God tear down their idols so that He may reign

supreme and alone. They won't let go of everything to Him. They won't relinquish their control of their affairs into His charge. Their innate rebellion, resistance, and resentment continue to grip them in a throttle-hold.

Emptied to Be Filled

Without the emptying the breaking of our willful hearts, we live in strife without peace, for within ourselves is only constant strife.

"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."

Isaiah 57:20-21

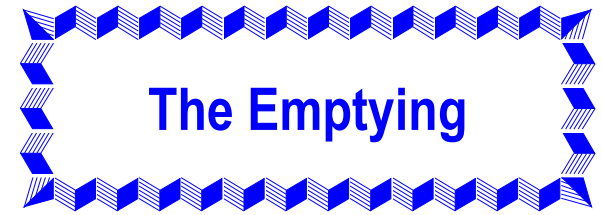
Often turn from yourself and toward Him. Worship and adore Him. Let Him empty you of all your independence. I've experienced both the quiet, beautiful benefits of such emptying and the sad consequences of missing it.

We must be emptied of our independent, rebellious selves to be filled with the Lord and His Spirit. I can't assure you of any other way of increasing dependence on the Lord than by being increasingly emptied of yourself. Without this we're driven to do. Do, in strife. Do, in fear. Do, out of necessity. Do, under pressure. Do, without peace, rest, and quiet meekness of spirit. Do, in self-reliance rather than in dependence on God.

My friend, God has something better for us than that. He offers Himself to do for us what we are incapable of doing.

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By: Pastor Ron Marr

"But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and base things of the world and the things which are despised, God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are."

1Corinthians 1:27-28

I was startled one morning to rediscover something of the deep blessing of earlier quiet times. I share this occurrence with you now, not that you may seek to emulate it, but to illustrate some of the thoughts I've expressed.

A Special Experience

I'd spent more time sleeping during about two hours with the Lord than I had actively communing with Him. Still, even in my sleep my heart was seeking Him.

As the time approached to begin my day's work, I longed for Him. Suddenly and unexpectedly, I found myself being emptied. A quiet joy filled me as He became all to me, and my independent self nothing. What had happened?

My spirit had come to the place of choosing God over all else. I wanted nothing but Him. I sought nothing but Him. I clung to nothing but Him. He was Lord of all. Anything that might try to supersede or supplant Him was repulsive. I wanted to give up and give over everything to Him.

Earlier on occasion, I had experienced the sense

THE EMPTYING

of my being entirely united with Him, lost in Him. Even though this was not the same, I was unconcerned. As long as I received more of Him and He more of me, my desires were totally met.

I was weak, gladly so, that His life might work in me. I was quieted because the striving vanished.

My self-will was gone, along with my selfish independence, self-conceit, fears, anxiety, and my need to be or do anything. My life was of no particular interest to me, because it was swallowed up in Him.

Tears flowed. He was there filling that emptiness with Himself, though I could scarcely believe He would fill such an unworthy vessel.

I wondered why I seemed to carry a pain with me into the start of the day. Then I realized it was quite literally broken-heartedness over my inner rebellion against God. I was grief-stricken that I could want to be independent from my Creator and God. My rebellion seemed horrible to my broken spirit. I was humbled, gentled, made tender, sensitive, and responsive to the Lord and toward others.

The restlessness, the demands, the pressure were reduced. Any sign of their presence produced a hurt in my heart that was already aching with the breaking and emptying and the desire that it continue. An intense reluctance to face people and circumstances that would reintroduce the strife into my heart and shame that anything should be able to do so flooded my heart.

Abrupt Endings

Why had I stopped experiencing such emptying? Did God need to strip me of my pride in the special things He had done for me? Did He in His

infinite wisdom know that a continuation of such experiences would deprive me of the humility I needed to learn to walk with Him?

Was I forgetting to let go and let God? Was I neglecting to relinquish everything to Him? Was I holding onto my control of my circumstances? Was I holding onto my right to things, needs, concerns, worries? Was I failing to let them all go to Him? In my heart of hearts did I want something more than having God in charge of everything for me?

Was it that in spite of my profession to accept everything the Lord sent my way as best for me, I really didn't? Though I thought it had improved, I was still frequently upset with people and circumstances. Such reactions are those of the world rather than of one who rests everything in His Lord. Inside I was still too often frustrated, angry, or fearful. At the time I thought the blame might lie especially with my failure to do as the Lord had asked and stop watching TV and overeating.

My Unwillingness to Trust Him

But I realized something very special that morning. No failure of mine needed to rob me of peace in the Lord unless it was willful. My unwillingness to trust the Lord with everything, including my failure, robbed me of Him. Having my eyes on myself rather than on the Lord incapacitated me to receive Him, His emptying, or anything else He wanted to give me.

The fact is that if I waited until I stopped failing my God altogether, I'd wait until eternity. Only by His grace do I receive any of His blessings, never by my deserving.

Sure, I often felt like a hypocrite for telling the Lord nothing mattered but Him, that I had no will but His, when I was continually failing to please Him in spe-

cific matters. But that morning I knew that just then I meant without reservation He was all that mattered. He had worked it within me. For that moment it was absolutely true, just as absolutely true as though I always lived fully by it.

This wasn't of my doing, but His. I could never do it. I could never empty myself. Only He could, even in spite of my failure. That's because my failure isn't the significant factor; His undeserved grace and mercy is.

Here we have come full circle, back to the place we started. We are qualified for His grace and mercy by our failure, and need, and sin!

Only by Him

All of this is God's work, not ours. Only the Lord can make genuine heart-seeking of Him possible. Only He can bring us to the place of actual heart-surrender. If we attempt it, we have nothing but empty words without meaning.

Instead, we present ourselves before Him in His merit alone with nothing in our hand but our need. Then we wait there for Him to work as He will.

We want to let go of our control of everything. We want to relinquish it all to Him in quiet meekness, trust, and confidence. We want to, whether we have the moral capacity to do it or not. We recognize that He can do all that we cannot. That's all. Then it's up to Him to do as He will.

Any self-effort will only stand in the way, just as much as will any self-dependence or anything else of self.

Not an Experience, But a Reality