

Open Arms

Reflection:

Andrew Murray wrote the classic book “humility”, which was originally published in the late 1800s. It’s a little book about the simple profound truth that God, the creator of the universe, would choose to lay bare, vulnerable, as a human baby. It’s about God’s humility in GIVING of himself. Of course, once we grasp that God is humble and generous, it follows naturally that WE have no right to cling, grasp or desire to possess. It is a total mindshift, that ALL OF LIFE IS GIFT and it is our job to keep the gifts flowing.

The bare, leafless winter tree is a picture of humility. The trees are stripped of their embellishment and the countryside is left looking poor, revealing all things previously hidden. It’s a picture of the incarnation – God, voluntarily unclothing himself of his grandeur and presenting himself poor, vulnerable, and limited in time and space and body. And he says to us... Come, free people, this is THE WAY.

Preparation:

Place a bare branch in the centre of the room (in a vase or pot) as a focal point at the beginning and end of our prayer and a reminder to do the practice each day.



Practice:

Step 1.

Consider the leafless branch and take a moment to reflect on God's humility and generosity by reading aloud Philippians 2:5-8:

Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing, he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.

Step 2.

Lay on your back, on the floor (in the crucifix position) with your arms out and hands facing up.

Take a few minutes to consider verses 6 & 7 ...

Jesus did not cling, He made himself nothing.



Step 3.

Remain in your posture of openness lying face up with open hands,

Ask the Lord, what can I give today?

Spend a few minutes and determine at least one act of generosity to do today.

[It might be tangible like money, a gift, a hug, a massage, a helping hand, a phone call, flowers. It might be intangible like time, attention, encouragement, forgiveness, thanks, prayer or honour.]

Step 4.

Stand up from the floor and pray aloud:

Lord, All of Life is Gift.

What do I have that is not yours?

Enable me to live with open hands and a joy filled heart.

Amen

*** If you have kids, then read the verse in the message paraphrase and write the generous act for the day on a leaf to deposit at the bottom of the bare branch. Then, revisit all of the leaves at the end of the week and give thanks for all the good things given in generosity.

*** Can I encourage you to keep going with the practices, I know it's a little unorthodox but remember it is bringing our whole selves to 'train' in gospel truths; using our senses to their best advantage. The value of a spiritual practice is in the **novelty and repetition**. It is through using our bodies and senses repeatedly in this way that we will drive the truth deep enough that it is still with us a week, a month, a year from now.