

Resisting the Temptation of Moral Formation

Dr. John H. Coe

Director, Institute for Spiritual Formation, Talbot School of Theology

© Copyright 2006 John H. Coe. All rights reserved.

1. Take counsel in your own soul and with the Lord regarding the degree to which you are tempted by moral formation, to use obedience and spirituality to cover your shame or hide from personal guilt. Enter into this deeply with the Lord to experience the truth as to what degree this permeates your life. Be not afraid, for He knows and accepts you in Christ.

15 minutes

2. Take counsel in your own soul and with the Lord regarding the degree to which you struggle with "neurotic guilt," that is, the degree to which your first and abiding response to personal awareness of sin are as follows:

- a. "I will do better" -- rather than opening more deeply to forgiveness/Cross, or
- b. General frustration and self-condemnation -- rather than allowing awareness of sin to be a door into love and a meaningful conversation with the Lord.

Enter into this deeply with the Lord to experience the truth as to what degree this permeates your life.

15 minutes

3. Read Luke 10:38-42. Take counsel in your own soul and with the Lord regarding the degree to which you are a Martha and/or a Mary as discussed in the lecture and from the gospel account. Open to God in the truth of this, for He loves you.

15 minutes

4. Open your heart deeply to the reality of the Cross and the Spirit. Meditate on the following Scriptures and pray the following prayers of intention for several minutes each.

a. Read II Cor. 12:9-10. *Pray:* "Lord, I no longer want to deal with my guilt in the power of my self, to hide from the truth of myself. I wish to come into the open with you about the truth of myself. I want to open to you in weakness, in my neediness so that I may depend upon Christ and the Cross to deal with my guilt. Teach me about this."

b. Read Phil. 3:7-10. *Pray:* "Lord, I no longer want to deal with my shame in the power of myself, to cover my sin and badness by being good. I no longer want a righteousness of my own derived from obeying the law but that which is through faith in Christ. Teach me about this."

c. Read John 15:5. *Pray:* "Lord, I no longer want to live my life alone in the power of the self. I want to learn to depend upon your Spirit, to be filled with your Spirit. Teach me about this."

Open your heart in prayer to whether these prayers really are the desire of your heart. If so, open to this. If not, then talk with God about what really is going in your heart.

30 minutes

5. If a spiritual friend is doing this prayer project as well, share together what each has learned and what happened in the prayer time. After each shares, pray for one another regarding what you heard the other share.

20 minutes