

The Mystery of The Three Dark Nights

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL.

- In 1577, a monk named St. John of the Cross wrote The Dark Night of the Soul.
- In the last 450 years, The Dark Night of the Soul has become a colloquialism and synonymous with the thought of going through life's difficult times.
- There are two other dark nights that those who seek uncommon depth in their search for God will face.
- Each Dark Night has both a singular purpose and an accumulative purpose.
 - The Dark Nights will conform the seeker to a deeper image of Jesus.
 - The accumulated purpose of the three will transform the seeker's life and align them with the nature of Jesus.
 - The Dark Nights remove that portion of "you" that God is targeting.
- Dark Nights have in common: a sense of loss for answers to where you are going and the spiritual loss of who you once were.
- Salvation is much more than reconciliation to the Father.
- The Greek word "saved", in Romans 5:10, is Sozo, which means to be made sound or well or healthy in every way.
- Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. — 1 Thessalonians 5:23
 - Each of the three Dark Nights are a step in the process God has chosen to aid you in the sanctification of your spirit, soul, and body.

TALKING POINTS

Teaching Session 1

THREE DARK NIGHTS

- Dark Night of the Wilderness. (Dark Night of The Flesh or our Carnality)
 - God in His mercy deals with our tendency to succumb to temptation and the resulting sin. During this time we go through a form of what Jesus went through in the wilderness.

- ◇ Jesus experienced three Temptations. (Luke 4)
- ◇ Pride of Life,
- ◇ Lust of the Eyes.
- ◇ Lust of the Flesh.
- ◇ As Jesus overcame His temptation in these three areas, we will likewise have to overcome being tempted in those same three areas.
- ◇ In today's language, we would say those three areas are:
 - ◇ The temptation to think too highly about our ourselves and our calling;
 - ◇ The temptation to promote ourselves to gain authority and favor with others;
 - ◇ The temptation to use any gift or talent we have to satisfy our own desires.
- One way we can tell if the Dark Night of the Wilderness is coming to an end: Do we blame others for our lack of success or failures.
- Most of us who enter the Dark Night of the Wilderness find that we take some form of self-identity from the very issue God wants to reshape or re-move from our lives.
 - ◇ We must allow God to break the chains of sin that we have failed to address in order to become a "slave of righteousness."
 - ◇ Many will quit before they get started, and the cost of righteousness will be too much for them
 - ◇ Jesus said, "many are called and few are chosen".
 - ◇ The sooner we are able to die to self, the quicker we exit from the Dark Night of the Wilderness.

TALKING POINTS TEACHING SESSION 2

DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL.

- Is the next step in the sanctification of our Spirit, Soul, and Body.
- Is parallel to Jesus time in the Garden (Matthew 26). "My soul is exceedingly troubled". "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."
- The three parts of the soul are: will, intellect and emotions.
 - ◇ Jesus was tested on all three: He was using His intellect as He reasoned with the Father about taking this cup from Him. He was overcoming His emotions as He was fighting sorrow, and he was fighting His will in order to embrace the will of the Father.

- ◇ John 12:25 "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternity." The Greek word for life used here is the word "psuche" which is the root word for SOUL.
- ◇ The Dark Night of the Soul is designed to help you conquer your soul and by so doing, keep it for eternity.
- We wonder if God is mistaken by allowing the Dark Night of the Soul.
 - ◇ You wanted to draw closer to God. Now, you suddenly are experiencing a deeper darkness, and more of the feeling of a loss of direction.
 - ◇ You may even wonder what happened to your destiny, where have God's promises gone, and why He isn't speaking to you anymore (or so you think).
 - ◇ Though this darkness will seem to last forever, it doesn't. The purpose for God's creating you will ultimately become clear.
 - ◇ The Holy Spirit begins His work on you from the inside-out, and His goal is to totally fill every space within you.
 - ◇ You will learn that God is turning the chaos in your life into a higher order. The result is deeper joy, peace, and higher faith that accomplishes all things as Christ strengthens you.
- The Dark Night of the Soul will produce fruit in your life.
 - ◇ When your spiritual eyes eventually adjust to the darkness, you'll realize He was always with you.
- You who are in this Dark Night of the Soul, may be thinking that God hasn't come through for you. If you are feeling, thinking, and believing that God isn't trustworthy and hasn't kept His promises, you more than likely have yet to complete the Dark Night of the Soul.
 - ◇ Sorrow, disappointment, and disillusionment are signs that you are still in The Dark Night of the Soul.
- The Dark Night of the Soul is the progression from exterior to interior spiritual life.
 - ◇ It takes effort, but giving up what you don't want to keep is the precise reason that God has wooed you here.
 - ◇ You learn to let go of your agendas that have been constructed from errant perceptions. Those errant perceptions form your thoughts, those thoughts form your choices, and the choices you have made are the reason for the uneasiness and disappointments that reside deep in the recesses of your heart.

TALKING POINTS Teaching Session 3

- During the Dark Night of the Soul, there is a seeming disorientation from the loss of our agendas.
 - ◇ You know you have an agenda when you become argumentative and stubbornly promote your thoughts.
 - ◇ Agendas can be hidden from you or known to you. Either way makes no difference; they must be eradicated.
 - ◇ Some of the signs of a personal agenda are an argumentative nature, defensiveness, jealousy, exaggeration, identity in your gift, aggressiveness, and a feeling that you are barely surviving. Yes, there are other signs as well, but these are the most common.
 - ◇ Most people, if not all of us, struggle with wanting our own agenda. Some more than others, some more seriously than others.
 - ◇ The length of your Dark Night is directly related to how long it takes you to get rid of your agenda and your self-sufficient strength. - You will make it if you do not quit.
 - ◇ Therefore the disorientation that comes is intentional, and it is the only way for you to lose your old patterns of behavior, your old ways of thinking, and your own agenda.
 - ◇ In the Dark Night of the Soul, you learn to follow the call of God on your life and leave behind what you thought you were called, designed, and purposed to do. Your gifts, your abilities, your personality, and God's wonderful design of you will start becoming more clear. You learn that all the abilities and interests God has given you are for a reason — you just may or may not have been using them correctly.
- God removes your dependency on what others think about you, so you learn to depend on Him. He does this by going deep into those inner recesses that you have allowed no one to see, let alone touch.
- The Dark Night of the Soul is the only way you learn to hear, think, and have passion for the matters that are on God's heart — His plans, His desires, His purposes: the very things you fight against at the beginning, you'll cling to as your greatest achievement at the end.
- You may not enjoy the disorientation, the transition, the topsyturvy effect, let alone the darkness and the confusion — but it is here you learn to hold onto God, and James 4:8 promises - if you draw near to God, He will draw near to you.
- As you exit the Dark Night of the Soul you have learned that God has a purpose for you and call on your life. But therein lies the problem that few see – YOU THINK YOU CAN DO WHAT GOD HAS

CALLED YOU TO DO.

- In the next Dark Night, the Dark Night of the Spirit, God will address the attitude of self-sufficiency in what He has called you to do.

TALKING POINTS: Teaching 4

DARK NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT

- It is more difficult than the other Dark Nights.
- It is the final step in the sanctification of our Spirit, Soul, and Body.
- Parallel to the time Jesus was hanging on the cross and is depicted by three of the things Jesus said; "My God, My God why have you forsaken me." – "It is finished" – and "Into Your hands I commit My Spirit."
- Designed to remove our self-sufficiency.
 - ◇ When we exit the Dark Night of the Spirit, we are sure we cannot do what God is requiring of us. Only God can do it.
- In the Dark Night of the Soul we are to pick up our cross, but in the Dark Night of the Spirit, God takes us to the Cross.
 - ◇ We realize we have done all we can do and that God has to do the rest. We feel God has abandoned us; loneliness attacks us. It is here we come close to God, as we die to self.
 - ◇ The Father allows us to come to the end of our self.
 - ◇ This is, in essence, where the Father took His son; this is where He will take us. To take on the nature of Jesus we will have to follow Him.
 - ◇ We will have to crucify our soul, so our spirit can rule. The psalmist wrote, "The spirit of a man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the inner depths of his heart." (Prov. 20:27)
 - ◇ In the Dark Night of the Spirit the deepest part of us is searched and our spirit becomes alive and radiant. We take on the nature of Christ. Here we are conformed into his image. Here we learn obedience.

CONCLUSION

If you are truly seeking a deeper walk with God, you will sense the coming of each Dark Night. At the beginning of all three Dark Nights, you sense that something's missing in your life, and you'll begin taking a spiritual inventory. You might find yourself saying, "something needs to change here. I have to find out what it is". The problem is that you will always come across the obvious or the things easily seen before you find the hidden roots God is after.

In essence, you can chop down the whole tree and feel satisfied, you can turn

and walk away . . . only to discover new growth on the stump come spring because you did not kill the roots. The Three Dark Nights are all about killing the roots that decay our life and relationship with God.

The first issues you find usually aren't the issues God is getting at. Things like anger, jealousy, and fear are real issues, but they are surface issues — at the root of those things lie the real problem.

The real issue is always in one of our "blind spots".

When we finally do start to draw close to the real issue, we'll try to justify the very matter God is after. We have to get over our self-justification.

Dark Nights happen because God wants all of you. It is face-to-face intimacy with the One who loves you as no one else could. That's the point.

Your walk with God, your relationships with others, and your entire life will be so much easier if you can remember this one, simple fact: If you're experiencing the transition that occurs in any of the Dark Nights, it is an open invitation from God to draw closer to His heart.

In all three Dark nights, we come to realize that what we have self-justified is actually hindering our destiny. In the midst of darkness we literally "see the light," and with this realization there is the dawning of hope.