

# DOC NEW LIFE NEWS

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## GOING DEEPER WITH GOD 1 JOHN 2:3-6 and 3:1-3

by Dr. Robert Moore, DOC President

For many years Christians have talked about “going deeper” with God. But not all Christians understand the idea in the same way. Some think that going deeper with God means to study God’s word, the Bible, in order to get a deeper understanding of his teachings. For others it means to seek some sort of exuberant ecstasy that expresses itself outwardly, perhaps in worship. For still others it means pursuing a quiet inner feeling of the presence of God within the soul. And others might insist that going deeper with God is a combination of these factors. Certainly each of these ideas has merit, but I believe that the apostle John has a more comprehensive idea of what it means to go deeper with God. I believe we can find his view in his first epistle, in 1 John 2:3-6 and 3:1-3.

The first idea John wants us to grasp about going deeper with God is that we must know him. Many, to confirm that they know God, rely on what the apostle Paul called

“the witness of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:16). That is, they “hear” in some inward fashion the indwelling Holy Spirit saying to them that they are children of God. Therefore, they conclude that they know him. This procedure is valid, but these verses from John’s first epistle suggest there is a more objective way to know whether or not we know God. John provides three characteristics or marks of those who know God.

THE MARKS OF KNOWING GOD in 1  
JOHN 2:3-6

First persons who know God **obey** him. Indeed John insists that we can be *sure* we know God if we keep his commandments (v. 3). With these words John affirms what Jesus himself had taught. Jesus said, “Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I tell you?” (Lk. 6:46) Thus those of us who know God obey him.

Second persons who know God **move towards perfect love** (v. 5). Many Christians are uncomfortable with this teaching. They do not wish to talk about perfection in relation to Christian experience. Generally this is because most understand the term “perfection” as *absolute* perfection. This definition of the word convinces them that perfection is impossible for Christians to attain. But this passage along with 1 John 4:12, 16-18 clearly teach that Christians are to move toward, and eventually attain, perfection in love (not absolute perfection). According to John Wesley, it is this perfection in love that constitutes the Christian perfection that Jesus was talking about in Matt. 5:48, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Third persons who know God **imitate** him. We are “to walk in the same way in which he walked.” Since Jesus is God in the flesh, we have a model of how to walk in the same way he walked. Jesus followed that precise pattern himself. Jesus obeyed the heavenly Father; the Father's love was perfected in him, and he reflected the life of the Father in his daily walk. Therefore, those of us who know God will walk as Jesus walked, in imitation of him.

William Barclay tells about a Greek writing tablet that is on exhibit in the British Museum. The tablet dates from the classical Greek period and is an example of a child's copybook for learning how to write.

The teacher wrote the first line. And then the student wrote the second line by copying the teacher's line. But when the student did the third line, he copied with his eye on the second, the one *he* had written, and so on. Consequently, each succeeding line is less and less like the one originally written by the teacher. That illustrates the broken character of our holiness. We imitate one another, or reproduce our own familiar imperfections, instead of portraying

the likeness of Jesus.

#### THE HOPE OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD in 1 JOHN 3:1-3

Now then, 1 John 3:1-3 deals with going deeper with God in a different way. According to these verses, going deeper with God is both a present and future experience. “See what love the Father has given us,” says John in verse one. John is excited! He's excited about the love of God. And he has good reason because God has made those of us who believe his own children. That's worth getting excited about!

Moreover we are God's children *now*, in the present. We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to enjoy being children of God. Therefore we do not have to wait for heaven to know God in the vital way that John has been telling us about. It is a vital, present experience! Therefore, if we successfully are going deeper with God, we will be enjoying our special status now, in the present.

Notice also that the “world,” John's term for the life of sin and sordidness that surrounds us, does not know us because it does not know him. But we do know him, and we can enter the deeper relationship that he desires for us.

This is great news, but John wants us to know that there is hope for even greater glory in the *future*, at Christ's coming. The depths of God will be even deeper in the coming kingdom. John writes: “it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

Wow! Here are three more important truths. First, he reminds us that Christ will come again. We easily could miss that, because John assumes it in the phrase “when he appears.” But John definitely is referring to the second coming.

“When he appears” means when Jesus comes again.

The second truth is related to the first. When Christ appears, when he comes again, we shall see him as he is. We get mixed signals from preachers about what Jesus is like. Some present him as a stern judge. Others see him as a wishy-washy “pussycat” that is harmless and ineffective. Still others see him as some sort of blessing machine who is interested only in pouring out wonderful material blessings on believers.

However, as so frequently is the case, the truth is much more complicated than that. John presents Jesus as a complex God-man about whom many things are revealed in the scriptures. But interestingly, in spite of all that revelation, we still do not see him as he is. But when Jesus comes again, we *shall* see him as he is! The clouds will drift away, the uncertainties will be dispelled, the doubts will be destroyed. The faith by which we now are living shall be transformed into the certainty of the glorious new age. What we have known vaguely, as though looking in a poorly reflecting mirror, will then become crystal clear (I Cor. 13:12).

But that is not all! Not only will he come again. Not only will we see him as he is. Third, we will be like him. Of course we are taught in the New Testament to be like him now. And as we have seen, John teaches that. And yet there is a “being like him” that is beyond what we experience in this life.

Perhaps in the end time there will be a completion, a consummation, of the process of becoming like Jesus. I don't know. I don't think John knew either. That's why he said, “it does not yet appear what we shall be.” But he *is* certain that, whatever we shall be, “we will be like Jesus.” And that's good enough for me. All

of this suggests that there is a going deeper with God even in the end time.

Verse three concludes this section. “And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.” In verses one and two John has been expressing our Christian hope. We believe, by faith, that we are children of God. We believe that the Lord Jesus, the risen Son of God, is coming again. And we believe that when he comes, we shall see him as he is, and we shall be like him. But when Christ comes, if we are to reflect his image back to him, as a good mirror reflects back *our* image, then we must be pure. Why? Because he is pure. And so John exhorts us to purify ourselves.

This touches on one of the mysteries of our faith. There is a sense in which we are incapable of purifying ourselves. Only God can cleanse our hearts of sin. On the other hand there is a part we play in the process. God will not cleanse us against our will. We must *want* our hearts to be clean; we must be willing to permit him to do the work in us. Therefore “everyone who hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.”

Now then, to summarize, in order to go deeper with God we must know him. That means we will obey his commands, we will allow his love to be perfected in us, and we will walk as Jesus walked. We also will let him cleanse our hearts by faith, so that when he comes again we will see him as he is, we will be like him, and we will be pure in heart. Thus going deeper with God is a life-long process that continues even into the heavenly realm.



# The Sounds of Silence

## The Disciplines for a 21st Century Housewife

by Betsey Mulloy, member of National and SE Region Boards

As members of the Disciplined Order of Christ, we yearn to display the qualities of Christ: obedience, simplicity, humility, frugality & generosity, truthfulness, purity, charity.... in a word: holiness. We have learned that the disciplines we covenant to keep are a great help to producing those lovely characteristics.

In the past year or so, I, as a DOC member (Southeast Region) and as a Bible teacher, have been sharing these disciplines with a group of women in ministry in Northern Virginia at a gathering called First Fridays. It is a time of worship, fellowship and corporate prayer for the various "vineyards" God has placed us in. We also have a brief teaching about how to stay close to the Source of all our life and work. In these meditations, I seek to apply the ancient disciplines to life today so that my sisters can stay "plugged in" to the power of the indwelling Christ.

In this article, I want to share the ideas that have helped us, praying that you, the reader, can apply the principles to your own place and schedule, finding strength and encouragement from the Word and other spiritual writings.

Knowing that the DOCers are already familiar with the reasons for and practice of Benedictine silence (see Bob Moore's *Back to the Basics*) I will start by reminding us of the many scriptures that encourage us to "Be still and know that (He) is God" (Psalm 46:10).

Habakkuk 2:20, for one, reminds us that "the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" -- this concept of our place before Almighty God is echoed in Ecclesiastes 5:1b-2: "...to draw

near to LISTEN is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few." Zechariah 2:13 continues the picture of the creature before the Creator: "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling."

The need to be a listener rather than a chatterer in the presence of God is extended by James (1:19) to apply to our relationship with our fellow humans: "Let every one be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

Does this mean that we "high verbals" are to totally hush? Not necessarily: Peter tells us in his first letter (3:4) that it is the "gentle and quiet *spirit*" which is precious in God's sight. That is, we may be designed to BE talkers and communicators....what counts is a heart that doesn't have to have the last word or fill silence with meaningless sound.

So what *is* Godly silence? It is not just the absence of worldly noise or our refraining from talking... but the attentive awareness of God's reality, His power, His goodness, His immanence (nearness), His help in time of trouble, and His direction, so that we can keep silence when told to, speak words "fitly" (Prov. 25:11) when told to. See Ecclesiastes 3:7b: "a time to keep silence and a time to speak."

But the world is so noisy.... why? George Prochnik in *Pursuit of Silence* believes that a fear of being alone drives us to crowds and noise. "We are loud in order to acquire earthly clout....Speaking helps us (like animals) secure a niche in the competitive

market; we are constantly adjusting our public image; we feel helpless if we're not able to vindicate ourselves by managing and controlling others' opinions of us." (Prochnik notes that the decibel levels of the speeches of Hitler were so loud as to be mesmerizing... shutting down the listener's capacity to judge what he or she was hearing.)

Why then do we also crave silence? Because Jesus is calling us to it. He Himself had a strong, constant drawing to silence and solitude with His Father. (Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline). And answering the call to silence in turn creates a more "quiet and gentle spirit." (see Peter, above) Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as quoted by Foster, echoes Peter as he notes the transforming power of solitude and silence: "Real silence, real stillness, really holding one's tongue comes only as the sober consequence of spiritual stillness."

What are the benefits of taking time to be silent before God?

1. It will make us realize our own smallness as contrasted with God's sufficiency. (The word "noise" derives from "nausea", specifically seasickness or disorientation. Silence in God's presence re-orient you to the truth that God is God... and we aren't!
2. We will not be so apt to quench the Spirit with our own ideas nor add to God's words so often.
3. We will not process our thoughts aloud so often, but will think them through in the presence of the Divine Counselor.
4. We will not pray "for others" (that is, for the admiration of others about our really fine prayers.)
5. We will *really* listen to others with increased sensitivity and compassion for them.
6. We'll be able to leave people to God's instruction instead of giving our own (see

Oswald Chambers in My Utmost for His Highest, August 1.)

So how do we *find* silence in our 21st century, media-saturated, beltway driving, time crunched world?

1. Grab the silences that do exist in your day.... God will show them to you. Jesus didn't have much control over His time and He still managed to do it.
2. Find a place: in a room, in a special chair, under the dining room table (a friend's mother... who had 13 children had one rule: no bothering mother when she was under the table), under your apron (like Susannah Wesley), in the car, in a library, in Starbucks, on a walk....
3. Go away for a whole day: there are many parks and retreat centers in most areas
4. Experiment with doing things without any explanation (that is, self-justification) or call for admiration
5. Let your words be few-er: speak plainly; do what you say you will; let your yes be yes and your no, no; live an entire day without words (see #3)
6. For a day: don't read the newspaper, turn off the TV and the radio and the CD and the computer.
7. A wonderful secret: ear plugs

The feedback from this teaching was wonderful. Many women said that the silence was like a cup of cold water that refreshed beyond all expectation. Those who began to build silence and solitude into their lives as a regular discipline have experienced even more "shalom".

Try silence... perhaps you'll have your own adventures to report to *New Life News!*

# **Discipline: The Freedom and Joy To Do What I Don't Want To Do**

by John Lurvey, DOC Vice President

“Shed Those Unwanted Pounds,” “Remove That Clutter That Clogs Your Life,” “Replace That Big Belly With Six Pack Abs,” “Get The Degree That Puts You Ahead,” and “Quit Linking Up With Losers” scream at us from the glossy magazine covers in the check-out line. Greater discipline provides the essential ingredient for the self-help promised. Without it the pounds pile on, the clutter clogs, the belly bulges, advancement abates and losers linger. Discipline means that elusive, but empowering freedom and joy to do what I don't want to do (or avoid what I should not do.)

Ah, if we could only take a discipline pill. We try, of course, with “Speed,” “Meth,” and the junior wannabes -- power drinks over-loaded with caffeine and sugar. Do we need to mention the harmful side effects of these “self-medications” or hear the clang of the metal door at the slammer of your judge's choice or face the morning after sleepless nights?

“My name is John and I'm a \_\_\_\_\_.” Fill in the blank with alcoholic, foodaholic, pornaholic, drugaholic, sexaholic, workaholic, neurotic, co-dependent etc. etc. The Twelve Step program works for some. Up front, it warns us that we need more than our ego to change. We need a “Higher Power.” Right away our ego chaffs at the thought of losing control. After all, the food, the stuff all over the house, the beer, the lengthening hours in front of the video screen, and the “relationships” give us momentary comfort. Stress seems to evaporate.

Blue sky and sunshine appear to break into our stainless steel shroud. As the sage Plato said to the ancient Greeks, our ego

always chooses what seems to it as “the good.” Over time, we discover that our “good” choices “don't turn out so good.” Self-help by self-discipline evades us because it contradicts itself. Our ego cannot do what it does not want to do. Just can't. Discipline requires our ego to yield to the One or the Higher Power or Sacred Center or whatever euphemism we use to speak of God, the “I AM” who is not the “I” that the Greeks named “ego.”

In light of the above, the Disciplined Order of Christ, whose first name is “Disciplined” should face an endless line of applicants. Yet, most ignore the DOC. Several suggested we drop “Disciplined” from the organization's name. It's a turnoff to the full-bore, consumerist, self-indulgent American Dreamer.

Why do people give up a day, a weekend or even most of a week for a retreat to get “disciplined”? It's more than the delight of the old California Mission's colorful gardens or the soothing quiet of a mountain trail. The birdsong and the kiss of a butterfly soften the callouses on the soul, but it's more than natural beauty. We learn the joy of the discipline from a speaker without pompous claims. She talks like the neighbor over the fence about her failures and faults, common to all of us. Then her discovery of the deeper Reality beyond own-most self shines through her face and words.

“There's even more than the real me behind the image and posture I often try to project,” she said. “As I go deeper, behind and beyond my always agitated ego, I discover a connection to the I AM who is not I. Saint Paul described God to the Athenian intellectuals as the One ‘in whom we live and move and have our

being.”(Acts 17:28)

“How do you know it’s not just, you know, you or a part of you?” asked a listener.

“The New Testament Letter to the Hebrews described the Word of God as alive, more than words on the pages of a holy book. The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit. . . . able to judge the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.” (Hebrews 4:12) For 2000 years people marveled over the man named Jesus who lived absorbing and expressing the Word of God that lives.

“That Living Word provides a perspective different from the habits of my ego. That’s why the Bible described it as the gift of sword-like discernment that refines our awareness of my immediate now. The Living Word’s new perspective on my immediate now moment provides a wisdom not my own – almost in spite of myself as my “ego-as-usual.” It re-frames the over-stressed, depressing ruts in which I find myself. When I no longer feel stuck in the rut, new energy bursts forth from my adrenal system. My eyes brighten. My mind clears. A way opens in front of me. Courage and desire shift from my habitual comfort zone to the “New Being” that God offers in every “right now.” Saint Paul described it as becoming a new person or new creation in Second Corinthians 5. I feel “reborn” as Jesus described the Kingdom of God to Nicodemus in the Gospel of John 3.”

“I’ve done what you said and it works. But later I slide back into the old ways.”

“Yes, that’s why you need retraining or discipline. It is necessary if you want to really “get” music or art or science. In fact, the university terms their fields of study in the sciences and humanities as “disciplines.” In music, you need to engage your intellect in order to grasp the concept that Bach or Duke Ellington or Bob Dylan

or the Grateful Dead express. The same principle applies to the life of the Spirit.

“Then you must refine your sense of the musical expression. You must expose yourself to challenging music rather than sugary pop. It forces you to focus on the subtle tonalities missed in casual apprehension. The same principle applies to fasting. For each, the more you “get by giving up” the more joy from the discovery.

“Then, in music we confront the non-verbal “vital drive” in the music itself. Beyond conception and artful apprehension, the self-authenticating deeper magic of rich music enlarges your soul and sense of reality. The vital drive of God’s Presence offers the joy through acts of discipline.”

“I think I get what you mean. Fasting and giving up allow openings to the subtle presence of God. Then I discern the deeper I AM actively present in my prayer and meditation.”

“Yes, you also learn to distinguish between God’s positive energies, as Saint Gregory described them, and your ego’s song-and-dance clatter. You also discern the seductive, but negative, self-destructive demonic spirits. They also attempt to incorporate themselves into your own-most self. ”

Albert Edward Day founded the Disciplined Order of Christ in 1946. He recommended seven disciplines that opened him to discover and continue to discern the refreshing, transforming and Captivating Presence of God in the dull, ordinariness and over-hyped excesses of our immediate now moments. You’re invited to join one of our retreats held from time to time throughout the United States.



## Money “Matters”....

by John D. Bankson, National Finance Development Chair

2011 has been a year of challenge for the DOC, but I am thankful we have wonderful friends and supporters of the Order. Please continue your prayerful consideration of financial support as you have in the past. As you look to your 2011 year-end contributions, please plan to include the Order.

Please keep those that serve you in the Order in your prayers. We value your prayers and

comments. Know that even though the National Board is doing all it can to be accountable for efficient operations, we need broad support to keep the vision alive. Please remember that we ask a minimum of \$50 per member annually to help offset operating expenses. In addition, we still need additional gifts to close the gap. A commitment card is enclosed. Thank you for your gifts and prayers.

### *Contact Information*

The Disciplined Order of Christ, founded in 1945 by Albert Edward Day, is an ecumenical spiritual movement of persons who are serious about their commitment to Christ and growth in the mind and spirit of Christ.

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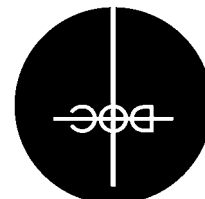
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