

o pray for you and help you

your old age. Then look at
preparing you to become this
d the community of faith for

ing your own sins before
avid?

out of touch with your sin,
up in your life: envy, lust,
er, pretense, avoidance of
o you want to talk to God
of God's expectations, and

rself getting hot, defensive,
behavior stems from your
make you alert to what trig-
these reactions. • Practice
of immediate confession.

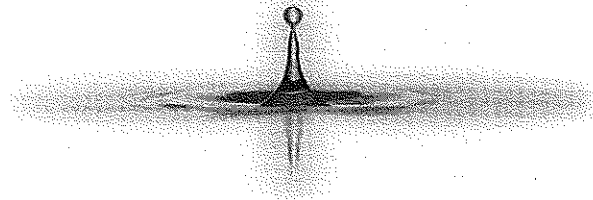
mpulsion, read a book on
e by Richard Rohr and An-

"All great spirituality is about letting go."—Richard Rohr

DETACHMENT

DESIRE	to nurture the spirit of trust that is attached to God alone
DEFINITION	Detachment means replacing the attachment to (1) idolatrous relationships and (2) self-serving goals and agendas for success, money, power, ego, productivity and image with wholehearted attachment to and trust in God alone.
SCRIPTURE	<p>"[Jesus] said, 'Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how. Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to saving yourself, your true self.' " (Mark 8:34-35 <i>The Message</i>)</p> <p>"Speaking to the people, he went on, 'Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot.' " (Luke 12:15 <i>The Message</i>)</p> <p>"Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not 'mine,' but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20 <i>The Message</i>)</p>
PRACTICE INCLUDES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • naming and confessing attachments that take priority over God • allowing others to lead and win • letting go of image management (e.g., not buying clothes just to stay in fashion) • letting go of notions that your money and possessions belong to you and make you who you are; living on less rather than more • trusting outcomes to God rather than your own capabilities • honoring the freedom of others; refusing to manipulate and control in order to get what you want
GOD-GIVEN FRUIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping company with Jesus in the letting go • freedom from an identity attached to image, possessions, achievements and so on • quickness to repent and center your identity in Jesus • freedom of addiction to your children, your family, your house, your money, your job and so forth • less need for temporal security; more trust in God • freedom to live as God's beloved • living out of your true self in Christ • dying to self; losing your life to find it • realizing that following Jesus includes descent, loss and death, and to live in a way that finds God in the midst of these things • learning the lessons of letting go so that you will be prepared for the final letting go of death

DETACHMENT



THERE WAS NOTHING JESUS WAS MORE ATTACHED TO than his Father. God came before his mission, his disciples or his family. Because God was the center of Jesus' life, worldly values came second. Certainly Jesus was tempted by the ascent to power, the need to appear successful and shortcuts to achieving his kingdom. But Jesus refused to let the world's values shape his life. He intentionally laid aside an identity built on being relevant, revered and upwardly mobile. He died to these things and fixed his eyes on what was unseen (2 Corinthians 4:18). Jesus was detached from making a name for himself that brought human applause. He embraced his humanness and staked his ministry on being God's beloved Son whether or not any one responded.

Jesus knows all about the discipline of detachment. He made the harrowing descent that relinquished heavenly privileges for a life of human limitations. The second person of the holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, exchanged heaven for earth, power for weakness, glory for obedience and suffering, success in human eyes for faithfulness in the eyes of God, and life for death. God was Jesus' first and only unloseable thing. Everything else could be lost.

Jesus let go; he detached. When faced with temptation he refused to use his divine prerogatives and lived like us, not like some superhero. Jesus did his life the same way we do ours. He risked everything by trusting the invisible God and his goodness when it appeared that this would mean dying in disgrace.

Part of the liturgy for many churches includes the words "Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." This threefold pattern, known as the paschal mystery, describes how true transformation is found on the far side of detachment, relinquishment and letting go. Through many mini-crucifixions the life of Christ is born again in us. Christ's pattern of letting go is our paradigm for life.

As followers of Jesus we are called to live as Jesus did. Jesus said, "Anyone who intends to come with me has to let me lead. You're not in the driver's seat; I am. Don't run from suffering; embrace it. Follow me and I'll show you how" (Mark 8:34 *The Message*). We are to relinquish worldly values and detach from anything that stands in the way of desiring and knowing God. We are to embrace Jesus' path—the path of descent and the way of

wounding. Richard Rohr writes in *Everything Belongs*, "Jesus crucified and resurrected is the whole pattern revealed, named, effected and promised for our own lives." A look at the cross makes this astringently clear.

Yet we often refuse relinquishment and remain blind to our attachments. We fail to see how our children or our goals for them and ourselves become the most important thing in our lives, receiving the bulk of our time, money and resources. We ignore our fixed attachment to our identity and how it is represented in our drive for possessions, control, comforts and achievements. We avoid any mini-death of relinquishment we possibly can. Relinquishment extends into the core of our identities, securities and addictions and says, "For the love of Jesus I will let go." It is only through letting go of the control streak that true trust in Jesus is born. As Jesus' apprentices we are to detach from the accolades of the world and receive ourselves as God's beloved. Detachment finds its true home in attachment to Jesus only.

In my own life this sort of detachment has touched me in simple practical ways.

My mother once commented on how much she liked a tablecloth in a friend's home. The friend whipped it off the table and gave it to her on the spot. This experience has worked its way into my own life. From time to time I give away what is admired in my home just as a reminder of what sort of things really matter. Furthermore, I see parting with a few beautiful things as a small discipline considering all the "letting go" I have yet to face.

Over Christmas when thousands of folks were snowed in at O'Hare airport, a friend called to tell me her son's flight had been canceled for twenty-four hours and that there was not a rental car to be found. Detachment in this instance meant letting go of our car for four days so a stranded traveler could drive the 150 miles to his home.

Moving to Chicago was also a deep lesson in detachment. Leaving the sea, the friends, the job, the church, the roots to follow Jesus to a new land came with losses and eventually a renewed sense of where my attachment lies.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you handle failure and weakness, suffering and loss?
What does this tell you about how you attach and adapt to the world's view of success, power and self-worth?
2. What are some specific ways in which mistakes and failures have worked for your good?
3. When has loss made God more real to you?
4. What about yourself are you most attached to?
5. Imagine a testimonial dinner in your honor. What would you like people to say about you?

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. Take an attachment inventory. Write a list of the defense mechanisms you are attached to (sarcasm, temper tantrums, aloofness, clowning around). • Ask God to make you

- aware of the times you instinctively move into your defensive response. Consider what seems to trigger your response. • What response would you like to cultivate instead? • Share your observations with a trusted friend, asking them to pray with you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you change your attachment to these behavioral patterns.
2. Practice letting go by giving away something you are attached to (money, time, possessions). Notice the feelings that arise in you when you think of giving something away. • Spend time talking to God about how attached you are to your things.
 3. Walk through your home or office, and in your mind give all you have to God. Tell him that you could live without the things you see. • What is this time of prayer like for you?
 4. Recognize your attachment to labels. How do you use labels to judge people? How attached are you to your professional label? Where do professional labels get in the way of really knowing others? • How might you enter a conversation without using the question, What do you do? as an entrée to conversation. Spend some time coming up with questions that lead you to a deeper appreciation of the person.
 5. Where in your life do you need Christ's spirit of detachment? Where do you need grace to pray "Not my will but yours be done"? • Talk to God about what it means to you to pray this sort of prayer. • How does praying this prayer make the reality of Jesus' life touch your own?
 6. Ask God to give you an opportunity to become more detached from secondary things. Share your car, your home, your second home, your time, your expertise with someone this week.

Resources on Detachment

Everything Belongs by Richard Rohr