

Noticing What Nourishes Us (Philippians 4:8)

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

We live in a world where the noxious mingles with the nourishing. What's wrong repeatedly intrudes into our lives. It draws our attention to itself, commands center-stage, fills our awareness, and blinds us to the presence of what's right. The God-shaped part of reality begins to seem inaccessible, almost as if goodness has disappeared. We despair. We feel empty. Robbed. But we rarely realize we've been tricked.

Evil is a master magician whose gestures focus us on what he wants us to see ... and distract us from seeing what he wants to hide. Our focus on the noxious robs us of noticing what nourishes us. (A mind set on what's wrong bears ugly fruit.)

What's our defense? Taking care to notice what nourishes us: the things that are honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent, and praiseworthy.

I'm not implying that we should ignore evil – that's blatantly unrealistic and unwise. But I am urging that we not let evil's presence convince us that good is not *also* present. Good doesn't disappear; we just fail to notice it.

Being Realistic

Don't think that focusing on the honorable, excellent and the like is some sort of stupid reality-avoiding mind game. Not at all. God is not telling us to ignore the flawed part of reality; but He is telling us not to let the world's flaws obscure our awareness of His equally real gifts.

Let me say it again: Good doesn't disappear. The things that are warm and nourishing won't go away. Why? Because they're from God and God won't go away. He stays near us in this world that mingles what we hate with what we love and mixes together the toxic and the nourishing. Good doesn't disappear because God doesn't disappear - neither does the availability of what nourishes us.

| **The reality of evil never erases the reality of good.** |

Shifting our focus from the ugly to the excellent is far from stupid and a long way from ignoring reality. When we shift our focus in the direction God suggests we find, to our surprise, that our inner experience shifts from discouraging to deeply joyful. Something so simple – just looking where God tells us to look – turns out to be something profound.

A Few Questions

- On what do you habitually focus?
- What nourishes *you*?
- Have you ever thought to notice what nourishes others?

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