



Free Listening Hearts Program Materials

A Primer on Spiritual Discernment: Topic 5

Detachment: Letting Go

Every major contemplative tradition places a high value on detachment, which means not clinging to anything—money, material possessions, personal relationships, opinions, convictions, not even our ideas about God. This does not mean that these things cannot be important to us. They can be very important. But they must not become our God.

One of the guidelines for Listening Hearts discernment is to hold your desires and opinions—even your convictions—lightly. At first, this may not make sense, because convictions by definition are deeply held beliefs. But this guideline does not ask that we throw away our convictions. It only tells us to hold them lightly—as in open hands. Try to imagine yourself sitting with your hands gently open in front of you—your palms up with your convictions resting gently upon them for anyone to see, anyone to examine. You are safe because if they are of God, no one can take them away from you. But if you are clenching them in a closed fist, intense with negative vibrations, or holding them tight to your chest, anyone who disagrees with you will likely stay away and never see what you have to offer. If you are serene and open and vulnerable, those who disagree with you can safely draw closer. If they do, there is a possibility that they may grasp the wisdom of what they now are beginning to see. From a practical standpoint, you have everything to gain and nothing to lose.

Consider another aspect of this openness. If you are clinging to your convictions, you are restricting the flow of the Spirit. Your convictions may be basically correct, but conceivably they need to be modified or refined, maybe strengthened. If you are holding them tight, you are inhibiting their growth and development—they become calcified. Spiritual maturity requires that we fully open ourselves to the movement of the Spirit so that God can continue to fine-tune our desires and convictions.

Maintaining a tight hold on anything—a relationship with an individual or a group; money; material possessions; a particular lifestyle or iron-clad opinions—impedes the flow of the living Spirit of love and truth. Thus the oft-repeated words “let go and let God.”

*Holding on to what is good (a form of attachment) holds us back from finding what is better.
Thus, detachment frees us to move continually toward a higher good.*

- Farnham and Grayson, *Keeping in Tune with God*, p. 21