

Kenichi Yoshida, from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, a former member of our church, and longtime friend of Pastor Moore, gave a most personal and moving talk about how he struggled with doing all the right “Christian” things, but came to realize that his life was not showing any of the fruits of the Spirit! He came to realize the necessity and importance of contemplative meditation on the Lord in helping him to transform his life so that he can listen more and hear what God has to say to him. It allowed him to then reflect his transformation in Christ more fully to others. Unfortunately we were not able to save his talk for you to listen to, but here are some notes on his message:

When we are in the face of stress, perhaps even looking right at someone who has severely hurt or persistently annoyed us, we really need to know exactly and fully, who we are. Without this centered stance of knowledge of our self worth and what we are committed to, we will be unable to respond in a Godly way. Isaiah 50:4-5 talks of how God has given the tongue of a teacher so that we may know how to sustain the weary with a word, and has awakened our ears to listen. Kenichi recommended the following process in order to develop a truer and deeper relationship with God:

Come to a place of silence before God. Pastor Moore has been encouraging us to daily contemplative meditation on God (You can listen to his recent sermon series: It's Ok to Love God More than You Love Yourself, and It's Ok to Love) and Kenichi strongly shared the importance and benefit of this daily practice. It is essential to hearing God. And since we profess God to be in charge, listening is critical to knowing God. Kenichi warned us, it is not easy. At first you will attempt to quiet your mind and all kinds of thoughts will race through your mind. Do not be discouraged! It may take months to get there, but it is well worth it.

Stay in this quietness, and expect God to drop a passage of scripture into your mind. Kenichi encouraged us not to worry about whether the passage came from us or God- just have faith in God!

Turn to that passage in the Bible and read it very, very slowly, several times.

Ask God “What moves for me in this passage?” A hunter that is alert and looking for prey, will immediately focus on the slightest movement and all attention will be focused there. As you re-read the passage, a particular word or phrase will eventually take on more significance.

Ask God “What are you saying to me through this one word?” At this point, be sure to keep the tsunami of your pre-existing thoughts, fears, expectations, and good or negative feelings about the word back for a bit. Give God the space to tell you what is important about the passage for you. You might be surprised to see things in a different light!

Ask God “What hinders the grace in that word?” Keep an openness to God's teaching as he illuminates where you need to go, or where you might have been stuck.

As you then move through the rest of your day, be alert as to how this word may come back to you. You will feel it's direction and the peace that comes from knowing God had laid this out for you. In time, you may meet someone who needs this word. At that point, when you speak, you can do so in confidence that you are representing God well!