

SMALL GROUP SESSION

THE TASK IS AT THE CENTER

Rev. Glenn Turner, First UU Church, Auburn, ME

OPENING WORDS & CHALICE LIGHTING:

“Self-discipline is a form of freedom. Freedom from laziness and lethargy, freedom from expectations and demands of others, freedom from weakness and fear - and doubt.”

- H. A. Dorfman, from “The Mental ABC’s of Pitching”

CHECK IN: (40 - 50 minutes)

What you share may be about your physical or spiritual health, cares or concerns for loved ones, issues you are facing.

Each person in the group speaks uninterrupted, if time remaining, general response and conversation is welcome. Confidentiality.

FOCUS: “The Task is at the Center”

In April of 2008, David Brooks reflected on some baseball insights by a sports psychologist named H. A. Dorfman. Dorfman says that “you can’t just urge someone to be disciplined; you have to build a structure of behavior and attitude. Behavior shapes thought. If a player disciplines his behavior, then he will also discipline his mind.”

A baseball pitcher focuses essentially on three things: pitch selection, pitch location, and the catcher’s glove, his target. He judges himself not on how the batters hit the pitch, but on whether that was the pitch he wanted to throw.

These lines in Brooks’ essay that stand out: “The pitcher’s personality isn’t at the center. His talent isn’t at the center. The task is at the center.”

Brooks argues that the best way to change the mind is to change the behavior. When the pitcher puts the task first, it has the effect of pushing his expectations, his ego, his nerve into the background. This helps the pitcher ³lose himself in the job.²

Discussion:

What have been the tasks that were/are central to your life?

Where has ego tripped you up?

How has discipline helped you?

Does the Biblical phrase “Whosoever would find his life must lose it” have any relevance here?

Is the focus on task at odds with the therapeutic culture’s focus on self-discovery and self-awareness?

LIKES AND WISHES

How did this session go for you? Is there anything you’d like to call particular attention to?

CLOSING WORDS:

“I knew the names of all the cows before
I knew my alphabet, but no matter the
subject; I had mastery of it, and when
it came time to help in the fields, I
learned to drive a tractor at just the right

speed, so that two men, walking
on either side of the moving wagon
could each lift a bale, walk towards
the steadily arriving platform and
simultaneously hoist the hay onto
the rack, walk to the next bale, lift,
turn, and find me there, exactly where
I should be, my hand on the throttle,
carefully measuring out the pace.²

- Joyce Sutphen -