**Sunday:**

1. **Meditations on the above?**
2. **How have you experienced the Father's love this week in big or small ways?**

**Monday: Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places**

**Though Nouwen seemed to come from a stable family, he said, "Somehow fear of being rejected, of being abandoned, of being disliked has been with me as long as I can remember. I kept asking my parents, friends and colleagues in many different ways: "Do you love me?" In *The Return of the Prodigal*, he shares how even a good father cannot meet our deepest needs for love. Only God can do that.**

**This reminds me of Sally Field's famous Oscar acceptance when she cried, "You like me! You really like me!" And what a fickle crowd to depend upon for love and identity.**

**Here is an 8 minute clip of Nouwen talking about looking for love in all the wrong places. As you listen, consider how you have trusted in these kinds of affirmations, for we need to expose the lies we believe.**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dB4DsEQr4Q

**3. Thoughts on the above?**

**4. Consider, how much is your identity based on any of the fickle following? (Be as truthful as you can)**

**A. The good things you do**

**B. What people say about you**

**C. What you have**

**5. Now, concerning each of the above, speak truth to your soul, using Scripture. (Use my suggestions or your own.) These are all of Jesus, but as He said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.)**

**A. Matthew 9:36 and Luke 8:36-50**

**B. John 2:24 and 1 Samuel 16:7**

**C. Luke 12:13-21**

**Tuesday: Under His Wings**

**Nouwen's first encounter with Rembrandt's painting was with the poster in another's office. The portrait of the father blessing his son touched a place inside him that "had never been reached before."  He actually collapsed, so great was his longing for the Father's love.**

**So often a picture or a "word picture" can reach the heart in ways words alone cannot. One of the aspects of Rembrandt's painting is that the father's cloak looked like wings.**

**The word "wings" in Scripture is translated in several ways - two different ways are seen in the book of Ruth.**

**6. Meditate on Ruth 2:12**

**A. How does Boaz pray for Ruth?**

**B. Meditate on this picture. Express what it means to you personally.**

**7. Meditate on Ruth 3:9**

**A. The word for "garment" is the same Hebrew word as is translated "wings." What does Ruth ask of Boaz?**

**B. Culturally at that time, a widow was destitute -- could not own property -- was among the poorest of the poor. What meaning does this add to the concept of wings?**

**8. Meditate on Psalm 91:1-4**

**A. What does it say?**

**B. What promises are here?**

**C. Since hard things still come into our lives, how do you make sense of this?**

**9. Keller says to ask, after meditating on a passage: "If I really believe this, what difference could it make in my life today?" Answer.**

**Wednesday: Mother and Father**

**10. As Nouwen gazed on the painting, he noticed how different the two hands of the father were. What do you see?**

**Nouwen saw a male and a female hand, a father and a mother. Nouwen reflected on his own parents: *It was my mother who offered closeness, affection, and personal care. My father seemed more distant. He was the provider who loved his wife, expected much of his children, worked hard, and discussed important issues. A virtuous, righteous man, but I found it difficult to be intimate with him*(Sabbatical Journey 81-82) The sight of the hands actually touching the child moved Nouwen deeply.**

**11. Consider your own mother and father, and if willing, share both the positive qualities and, perhaps, the negative that could have distorted your view of God as Father.**

**12. Meditate on Matthew 7:11.**

**A. What does Jesus say?**

**B. What is He telling us about the Father's love?**

**C. How might you apply this?**

**13. Meditate on Matthew 23:37**

**A. What is Jesus' lament?**

**B. How does this show Him as a "mother?"**

**C. Notice who He loves (is it because they are good?) How does that calm your heart?**

**D. Notice the word "wings" again. What did Jesus say in  John 14:9? Thoughts?**

**Thursday: Nothing in my Hands I Bring**

**In the painting, Nouwen began to look at the younger son. He's missing a shoe and the other is tattered. His robe is filthy. But none of that matters to the Father. This spoke deeply to Nouwen for his own father's love seemed conditional on how well he did in life.**

**14. Meditate on Luke 15:11-22 and find everything you can that shows what our heavenly Father is like.**

**15. Recently a pickleball friend came to Christ. She prayed a prayer of repentance and faith in Christ. But then she asked me: "How do I know He will accept my prayer? I'm so unworthy." What would you have told her?**

**Friday: Born Anew**

**Then Nouwen looked at the younger son's head in the painting. He was nearly bald, like a newborn baby, his head pressed into the heart of His Father. The more he looked at the painting  she saw  that it was actually "a large gate" for him to meet the One he had been searching for since he was born -- "the God of mercy and compassion." The more he looked he saw that the image of God created by Rembrandt was not just a warm father, but the womb of the divine Creator. He had come home.**

**Sometimes in our little church, due to good teaching on Scripture penetrating the heart, a person will "I feel like I've been born again, again!**

**16. Can you identify with the above? Have you had an experience of feeling like you've come home to God, or of being quickened, of being "born again, again?" What precipitated it?**

**Saturday: Take-A-Way**

**17. What is your take-a-way, and how, if you really believed it for today, might your life be different?**