

Interior Castle Fourth Dwelling Place - Chapter 3, Para 2.

“A recollection that also seems to be supernatural because it does not involve being in the dark or closing the eyes, nor does it consist in any exterior thing, since without first wanting to do so, one does close one’s eyes and desire solitude. It seems that without any contrivance the edifice is being built for this prayer.” [no.1]

These words from the first paragraph of this chapter give us a sense of the type of prayer Teresa is speaking about in the 4th dwelling place. This is prayer that is totally a work of God, it is pure gift and the person is gradually being awakened to its existence. She uses a variety of terms and various images to convey the message that everything is changing and that God is now gradually and subtly taking over. It is the God of the Bible, King and Good Shepherd, whose presence, word and action, we discover in this very blessed room.

1. We become “bible people” through the following of Jesus and the living of a life of prayer. We begin to think in a biblical way and discover a deeper familiarity with biblical figures and biblical imagery. What the bible reveals is happening more and more in the depths of the person.
2. The Shepherd’s whistle is the important image here. The whistle is subtle, silent and mysterious. Only with God’s grace can it be heard and understood. *“Before one begins to think of God these people are already inside the castle and I do not know in what way or how they heard their shepherd’s whistle. It was not through the ears because nothing is heard ...one senses a gentle drawing inwards”.* [no.3]
3. The whistle, the word, the voice has the power to change lives because it is coming from the 7th dwelling place, from Christ Himself. However we have no control and very little understanding of that change.
4. Only Jesus can teach us to recognise His voice – we learn through listening to Him. This is the beginning of a new and deeper listening – a listening that is total gift, we can do nothing to learn it or bring it about; yet at the same time everything that has been lived and learned up until now is a preparation for this.

5. The person in this dwelling place feels a strong desire for silence and solitude – often in the midst of some of the most challenging and difficult circumstances of human life. External circumstances do not contribute to this silence; neither can they take it away: in other words, it is not a silence that can be created by “ideal” human circumstances, neither can it be taken away by “adverse” circumstances.
6. In this stage of transition and growth there is a pulling away from the things of this world [in desire, if this is not possible in reality] and a growing detachment and inner freedom.
7. The spiritual life is a work of God, not a human enterprise – up until now this is only known as a theory, now it is beginning to be experienced as reality. The Kingdom that God/King is ruling, the sheep that God/ Shepherd is caring for, is within me. It is my life and it is happening now, has always been happening, and nothing is going to compromise it or stop it.
8. A practical question arises here: What must I do? Must I change my way of living? This is a time to continue doing what one has always been doing. Everything learned in the first three dwelling places still applies and the person is returning to these regularly. In this dwelling place a deeper love is being learned, God is the teacher – the person is learning to listen and respond to Him. *“The soul’s progress does not lie in thinking much but in loving much”* – this is the teaching of the 4th dwelling place.
9. Teresa is attempting to explain the double movement of this Book: *“The soul enters within itself”* and *“the soul rises above itself”* and she is pleased with her explanation: *“I don’t think I have ever explained it as clearly as I have now”*. This book is about the shepherd’s whistle [the voice of Jesus] calling and leading his sheep [people/souls] back to their dwelling place [the centre where Jesus is]. The 4th dwelling place is the crucial turning point of this journey.

Points for discussion:

The 4th dwelling place is critical for the understanding of the whole book.
Why? Discuss!

- What do you find most encouraging in this part of the book?
- Change, Loss of Control, Lack of Understanding, Entry into Unknown – this is the 4th Dwelling Place: Am I open to it????
- Is the experience of reading the Interior Castle taking you back to the scriptures?