



REST *in the* MOMENT

REFLECTIONS FOR GODLY PAUSES

BY CHRISTINE SINE

To all seeking Godly pauses in their daily life.

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Seattle, Washington
www.msaimagine.org

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Graphic Design by Hilary Horn
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ISBN: 978-1544030821

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INTRODUCTION

St Benedict uses 2 words for silence: *quies* and *silentium*. *Quies* is the silence that comes with the absence of noise. The silence that engulfs us when we turn off the TV, disconnect from the internet and discard our cell phones. This is an external silence. It is an extremely important form of silence that all of us who live busy, urban lives need to enter into.

Sixteenth century mystic, John of the Cross called silence "God's first language" not the language so much of a silent place as of a silent soul. This is *silentium*, an internal, intentional posture of complete attentiveness toward God. It is a silence of making space for, taking time for and paying loving attention to the One we proclaim to be our God and Lord. It is more challenging to enter into this kind of silence because it doesn't just mean finding a quiet place. It means establishing a quiet inner attitude in which we set aside the distractions of our minds and hearts, draw from the stillness that is within us and commune with God in a very special way.

Rest is meant to be an important part of the rhythm of our lives, not just a weekly rest of Sabbath, but pauses of rest throughout the day to reset our focus and renew our connections to God. Even my FitBit tells me that I should relax for 2-3 minutes at regular intervals. We all need times when we pause for refreshment and renewal. Just as the night calls us to rest after a busy day and the winter calls us to rest after busy seasons of planting growth and harvest, so too does God beckon us to rest after hours of busy work.

Richard Foster in *Sanctuary of the Soul* suggests that

constant distractions create noisy hearts, wandering minds and perpetual inner chaos. In order to enter the inner silence of God we need help to slow down and focus our attention on what really matters. The reciting of poetry or scripture, the singing of songs, writing of prayers or other rhythmic activities like knitting, walking and sweeping can open for us this inner silence of God because they do just that. They slow us down and their rhythm enters the depths of our being calming our spirits. Sometimes they create images in our minds that open new doorways through which we see God.

Rest in the Moment is designed to create sacred pauses during your day. Each meditation provides a prayer, a short reflection, a scripture, a place for response, some music to listen to and a closing prayer.

There are many possible ways in which to use these. Whichever you choose however, try to find a quiet relaxing place to sit. Close your office door, get yourself a cup of your favorite beverage and rest a moment.

Here are a few suggestions you might like to try:

1. Set aside 5 minutes to read through the entire meditation at one sitting. Savor the words and allow them to sink into your soul.
2. Use the meditation to encourage you to pause for 3-5 minutes throughout the day. Set your clock to remind you to pause. You might like to use the sound of a bell or your favorite hymn as a reminder. At your first pause read through the prayer first silently and then aloud. Is there a phrase that stands out for you? If so write it down. At your second pause, read through the reflection and again write down what comes to you. For your third pause

take some time to respond. What has come to you since you first read the prayer this morning? Write down your responses. At the end of the day take time to listen to the music, maybe you can reread the reflection and allow God to speak further to you. Finish with the closing prayer.

3. Use the same meditation every day for a week. Savor the words, God's voice in the midst of these and your responses. Write your own prayers, or poems, draw pictures and keep a journal of how God speaks to you.

The rhythm of rest is written into God's world and into our inner being. My hope is that you will pay attention to this rhythm and find the enrichment that slowing down and pausing throughout the day provides.

R E S T
in the
M O M E N T

REST IN THE MOMENT

*Rest in this moment of God's creating,
Savor its beauty,
Inhale its fragrance,
Listen to its music.
Sit in awe of our God infused world.
Rest in this moment of God's unfolding.
Live not in regrets of the past,
Or anxieties for the future.
Let go your distractions.
Be content with what is.
Rest in the moment of God's enlivening.
Let the wonder of its gifts open before you
like an unfurling flower.
Inscribe them on your heart.
Root them in your soul.
Create within you a place of prayer.*



“ Life is too urgent to be lived fast, too important to be consumed in a blur of activity, too precious to not take notice of the God moments, the God love that bursts out in an unexpected hugs and unanticipated beauty.

ANN VOSKAMP, ONE THOUSAND GIFTS

Each moment of every day invites us to rest in the presence of God and fully savor all that God has poured into that moment. Each moment is unique, special, never to be recreated and it offers therefore a unique and special revelation of God. If we do not take notice of it now we will never have the opportunity to appreciate it again.

When we think of rest this is not usually what comes to mind. We imagine a good night's sleep or an afternoon nap. Some of us think longingly of a Sabbath rest of relaxation and renewal. Few of us know how to rest in the delight of a moment that draws us into the presence of the eternal I AM, the God who is present now, here always.

This is an elusive rest. It means letting go of control over our schedules and our relationships. Sometimes it means letting go of things that we love to do or people that we care about to create time to notice and appreciate the presence of God. It might mean letting go of hopes for the future or of busyness and fast paced lifestyles. Whatever it might be that holds us captive, we will never learn to rest fully in the presence of God unless we can relinquish our desire to be in control of our lives.

We love to be able to move fast, map out our lives and feel we are in control. Then we get sick, lose our job, or a


loved one dies. We lose control and in grasping to regain it we find life has changed. We get angry, blame God, long for the things that are no longer possible, become resentful. In the process we often miss the God moments all around us.

Resting in the moment, finding our contentment in God and fully savoring the depth of God revelation each moment holds learning to be content no matter what our circumstances. Paul found this kind of rest:

PHILIPPIANS 4:11-13 (NLT)

I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT

 O REST IN THE LORD
BY ANTHONY RODRIGUEZ
youtu.be/3mkswYQ5hoA



STAY CLOSE TO THE CRACKS

*Stay close to the cracks,
to the broken places,
where people weep
and cry out in pain.
Stay close to the cracks,
where God's tears fall
and God's wounds bleed
for love of us.
Stay close to the cracks,
where light shines in
and grass pushes up
through concrete.
Stay close to the cracks,
where weeping wounds
open unexpected doorways
to healing and wholeness and life.*

“ Ring the bells that still can ring,
Forget your perfect offering,
There is a crack, a crack in everything,
That's how the light gets in.

ANTHEM, LEONARD COHEN

In Eager to Love, Richard Rohr comments that St Francis of Assisi asked us to stay close to the cracks in the social fabric of our world. His advice is just as important now as it was hundreds of years ago. We are all very aware that there are cracks in the fabric of the world we live in.

Everything in our lives and in our world has cracks, wounds and broken places that tell of pain and suffering. Sometimes we try to cover them over, perhaps with a joke, laughter or a pasted on smile, attempting to seal them off from the light. But this only makes the wounds fester and get worse.

Yet it is in the cracks, the broken places of our lives, where violence flares and pain cries out that healing can happen. When we acknowledge our imperfections, we take the first step towards wholeness. It is into the cracks that light can shine and water can seep. It is in the cracks in the concrete that seeds lodge, germinate and take root. As green shoots reach for the sky, the crack enlarges, the concrete crumbles and what was meant to live and breathe thrives once more.

Recently, at our local mall, I noticed that what was once a solid concrete slab of parking slots has now been transformed. Deliberate “cracks” have been added between the rows of cars – small gardens that channel

the water into the topsoil and down into the water table below, They are thriving and the rain no longer creates a flood of water that overflows the drains and clogs the waterways.

Sometimes when we stay close to the cracks we realize that they need to be nurtured and strengthened to rebuild the fabric of our lives and our society. We need to allow the water to enter and cleanse them. And as we nurture and water them it is not only the surface life that thrives. It is the deep wellsprings of the water table that flourish too.

JOHN 1:1-6 (THE VOICE)

*Before time itself was measured, the Voice was speaking. The Voice was and is God.
This celestial Word remained ever present with the Creator;*

*His speech shaped the entire cosmos.
Immersed in the practice of creating,
all things that exist were birthed in Him.*

*His breath filled all things
with a living, breathing light—
A light that thrives in the depths of darkness,
blazes through murky bottoms.
It cannot and will not be quenched.*

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



ANTHEM
BY LEONARD COHEN

youtube.com/watch?v=6wRYjtvIYKO





RESPONSE

If possible after reading the reflection, go for a walk outside and look for a crack in the pavement where there is grass growing. Take a photo of the crack and use it to focus your attention when you go back inside. Recite the prayer above and allow the living water of God to wash over you. Look at your photo or at the image with the prayer, and think about the cracks in your life.

What cracks in your world, what places of woundedness and vulnerability that give you ongoing pain come to mind? In what ways have you tried to cover these over so that your life appears respectable? Are there ways you respond, perhaps with fear, or anger or intolerance that show these are festering? Perhaps there are things you need to confess or seek forgiveness for. Offer these up to God in prayer.

Look closely at the green shoots bursting out through the concrete. Think about the light that has shone into those cracks to enable the seeds to germinate and grow. Now think about your own life. Where has light shone in your dark cracks? What has it begun to give life to? Are you aware of green shoots emerging towards the sun? How could you nurture their growth and make help them to thrive?



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, thank you for the light that shines in the cracks bringing healing into our places of woundedness. Thank you for the green shoots of new life that are nurtured by your light and grow, destroying the hard concrete places that seemed so impenetrable. Thank you for the hope of healing and wholeness in all parts of our lives.

LISTENING AFTER THE STORM

*Lord you come,
Not in the lightning, not in the thunder,
But in the stillness after the storm.
May we take time
to listen to your gentle whispers,
watch for your restful moments,
learn from your quiet promptings.
Lord you wait,
longing for us to draw close.
May we let go of the chaos
within and without.
Make space to welcome
your loving presence,
and rest in the peace
of your eternal embrace.*



The sound of 'gentle stillness' after all the thunder and wind have passed will be the ultimate Word from God.

JIM ELLIOT

I sit this morning amazed by the stillness around me. We had a thunderstorm last night with pounding rain and flashing lightning but it is hard to imagine that as I sit quietly drinking in the beauty of God's world. The air is clean, the mountains crystal clear, the birdsong loud and exuberant.

We live in a stormy and turbulent time, and like many of us I feel battered and worn. Suicide bombers, fleeing refugees, fears about climate change. Hatred and vitriol thunder around us exacerbated by the growing political animosity and name calling. In my own life the sudden death of a friend and the turmoil of major life transitions swirl around me. Even the Internet trolls had a go at me.

Storms make it hard to focus and even harder to draw close to God. It is not easy to move beyond the thunder of strident angry voices raised in judgment and condemnation. The supercharged atmosphere caused by violence and animosity incites us to respond with our own violence and anger. But in the aftermath of a storm, the gentle whispers of God's voice can be heard with amazing clarity, if we are willing to sit still and listen to them.

After a storm is always a good time to look, to listen and to take notice. Colors shine with a vibrant light, sounds resonate with fresh melodies and sights seem vivid with new life. And in the stillness I become aware of God's safe harbor and the gentle whisper, beckoning me to rest, to refresh and to receive comfort.

Yet taking notice of the vibrant clarity that comes in the aftermath of a storm is a deliberate choice. We must stop, sit still and listen. Sometimes we don't want the safe harbors God offers us. We would rather hide from God and live in the chaos where supercharged emotions control us. We are afraid to reach out for the inner peace that God's gentle whisper offers us because it comes at a cost we may not be willing to accept – the letting go of our resentments and prejudices or the loss of personal freedoms in the pursuit of the common good. Or perhaps it means the letting go of fear itself in order to allow the love of God to embrace us.

PSALM 107: 23-30 (THE MESSAGE)

*Some went off to sea in ships,
plying the trade routes of the world.
They, too, observed the Lord's power in action,
his impressive works on the deepest seas.
He spoke, and the winds rose,
stirring up the waves.
Their ships were tossed to the heavens
and plunged again to the depths;
the sailors cringed in terror.
They reeled and staggered like drunkards
and were at their wits' end.
"Lord, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
He calmed the storm to a whisper
and stilled the waves.
What a blessing was that stillness
as he brought them safely into harbor!*

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



**BE STILL AND KNOW
BY DON MOEN**

youtu.be/bu-pRps0gfU



LISTEN TO THE SOUNDS UNLEASHED IN THE SILENCE

*Listen for the sounds
unleashed in the silence.
Listen for the voices
of stones that cry out
to the glory of God.
Look for the sights
unveiled by the rising sun.
Look for blossoms
shimmering in morning light,
singing God's praise.
Breathe in the gift
of faithful promises.
Breathe in the hope
of a future world
now but not yet,
where freedom triumphs,
peace and abundance reign.*

“Silence is the great teacher and to learn its lessons we must pay attention to it. There is no substitute for the creative inspiration, knowledge, and stability that come from knowing how to contact your core of inner silence.”¹

DEEPAK CHOPRA

It has been a busy week with much noise and activity. Even as I sit in my office the road and air traffic fills my world with noise that easily distracts me. My mind flits from one project to another, reminding me of details still to be completed, tasks left undone. Physical and mental silence is elusive, but in the depths of my soul I know I should be able to find a place of inner calm and silence at any time.

Meister Eckhart said nothing in the universe resembles God more than silence.²

Finding the silence that comes from a soul at rest and at peace is a remarkable thing. It is a gift that must be received from the hands of God and then opened in the presence of God in order to be fully appreciated. It is in fact far more than a gift from God, it is a revelation of who God is. A pause, a few deep breaths to center myself on God, a deliberate relaxing of my muscles and suddenly I find myself entering that place of silence where God dwells and is revealed as the eternal, faithful, holy and righteous One; the generous, caring compassionate One; the healing, restoring, renewing One. The possible revelations of God that come in that place of silence as we enter the deep abiding presence of God, are endless.

Read the prayer above slowly, focusing on the words and their message. Listen to Sound of Silence by Simon and

30

Garfunkel. Sit quietly in the presence of God; breathing in and out slowly again.

Now say YHWH slowly in sync with your breathing, (YH breath in; WH breathe out) savoring each syllable and the breath it draws into and out of your body. Breath holds the essence of God. Imagine its gentle whisper flowing into your lungs, oxygenating each blood cell and spreading out through your body. Imagine as you breathe it is the love of God, the peace of God and the stillness of God that you breathe, those quiet, gentle whispers through which God so delights to speak. Read the prayer again and listen to the music. Relax your body as you breathe out, and imagine the music flowing with your breath down through your body into the ground.

1 KINGS 19:11-13 (NIV)

The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



SOUND OF SILENCE
BY SIMON AND GARFUNKEL

youtu.be/4fWyzwo1xg0



WALKING IS FOR NAMING

*Lord you know us.
The innermost parts of our being,
Our going out and coming in.
You know us Lord
And call us by name.
May we hear your voice Lord,
See you Lord,
Come to know your name.
Confess who you are,
And call you by name.*



“ Everything on Iona has a name. Each physical feature of the island has been part of a specific human experience and therefore thought worthy of bearing a name....

These many names are a testimony to the human scale of life on Iona. As the scale of physical size diminishes as one travels to the island-England, Scotland, Mull, Iona-the scale of individuals and spiritual significance increases. Walking is the maximum desirable speed for seeing things fully enough to name them. And when we name things we begin to value them. No wonder we want to be named and known.³

DANIEL WILLIAM TAYLOR

The island of Iona off the West coast of Scotland is a holy place, a place that even today can only be explored by walking. It is resplendent with names like The Hill of the Angels, Columbia's Bay and Martyr's Bay. They speak not only of the people who lived there but of what happened there as well.

To really see and fully enter into the world around us we must walk not run or drive. When we walk we want to know everything and everyone by name. We say hello to the people we meet, we look at the flowers and mention them by name, we watch the birds and identify the species. We even like to give our own names to landmarks we pass and houses we enjoy.

Surprisingly the gospels rarely call people by name. One exception is Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar whom Jesus heals in Mark 10:46-52. Most of Jesus healings are of anonymous people – a paralytic, a leper, a widow's son. Few are named. There is Lazarus, who was a close friend of Jesus' and now there is Bartimaeus. He was someone special enough

to be named. Maybe this Bartimaeus became a follower of Jesus, someone that the gospel writer knew personally.

Names have power, they change the way we look at people and places and the way we relate to them. If we call a person by an anonymous term – refugee, feminist, homeless person, shop assistant, homosexual – we respond to them differently than if we call them by their given names. To address a person by name changes our relationship to them and changes the way we think about them.

To know someone or something by name we must move slowly enough to take notice and walking is indeed the fastest pace for noticing. To give a name, especially an appropriate name that reflects a person or object's nature, we must be able to see it fully. To continue appreciating it we need to slow down and notice, not once but regularly. Only in walking or in stillness is this possible.

JOHN 10:1-5 (NLT)

"I tell you the truth, anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold, rather than going through the gate, must surely be a thief and a robber! But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. They won't follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don't know his voice."

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



JESUS NAME ABOVE
ALL NAMES

youtu.be/iBVFvtM9SzM





RESPONSE

It is not just the names of people and places we forget. We often also forget the names of God. Sit quietly thinking about the aspects of God's character that you have encountered in the last week. Name each of them in your mind, say them out loud, savor them on your tongue, then write them down. Remind yourself of what each of those names means to you. What is one way that you could strengthen your memory of who God is and what God means to you by the use of names for God.

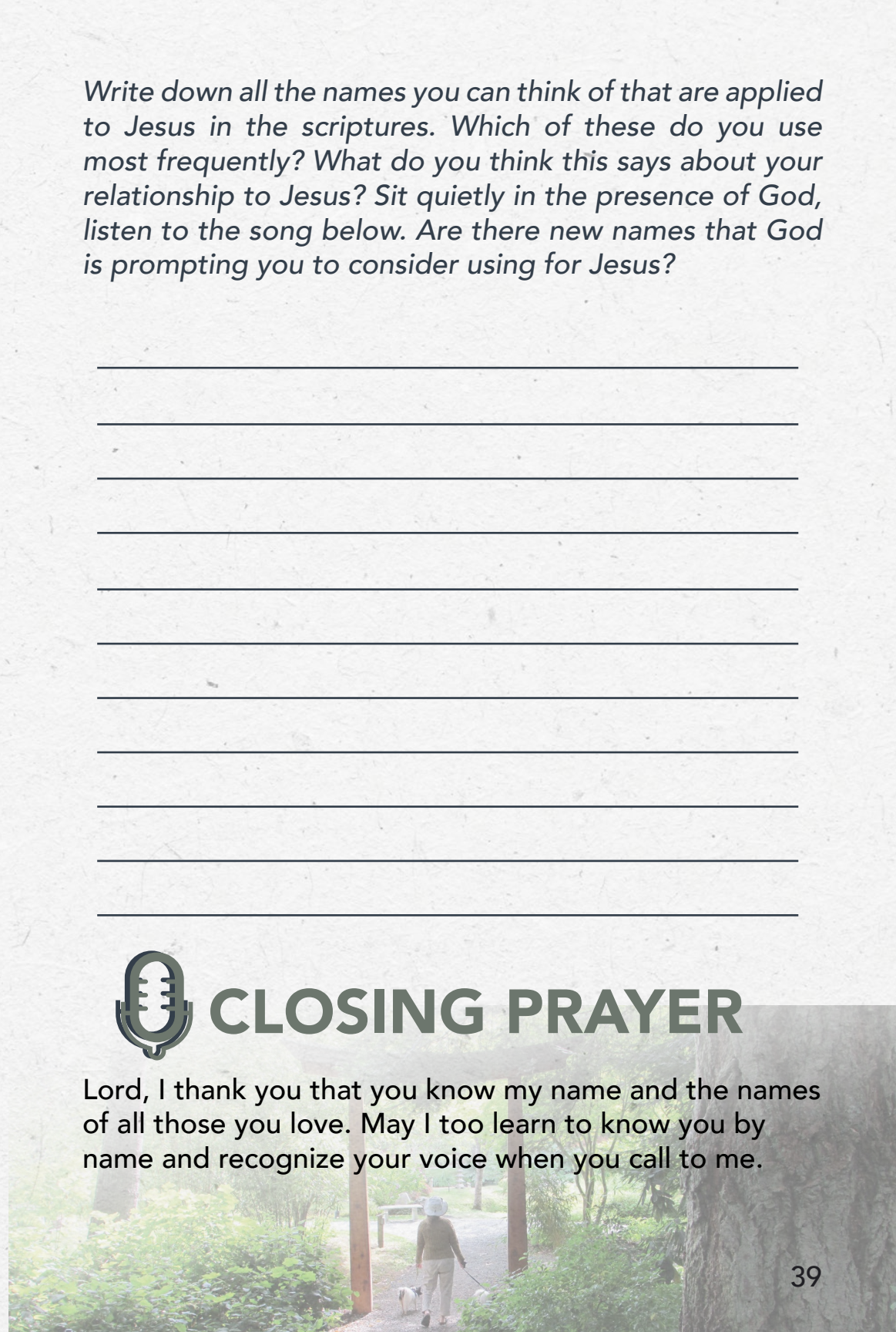
Names change the way we look at Jesus too. To call Jesus the Christ, Lord, Saviour, Redeemer, conjures up different images than when we call him friend, shepherd, companion, brother, lover of my soul. The first list makes us think of a powerful God, distant, maybe even a little cold. The second list carries a sense of intimacy, and draw us into a close and personal relationship to God.

Write down all the names you can think of that are applied to Jesus in the scriptures. Which of these do you use most frequently? What do you think this says about your relationship to Jesus? Sit quietly in the presence of God, listen to the song below. Are there new names that God is prompting you to consider using for Jesus?



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, I thank you that you know my name and the names of all those you love. May I too learn to know you by name and recognize your voice when you call to me.



EVEN THE UNNAMED MATTER

*Let us act as children of light today,
Forgiving not condemning,
Merciful not judging,
Embracing not excluding.
Let us absorb God's light,
Doing good,
Proclaiming truth,
Living wisely.
Let us radiate Christ's light,
Extending hospitality,
Welcoming strangers,
Providing for friends.
Let us live in the true light,
United in Christ,
Filled with the Spirit,
Attuned to God.*





It is said that this woman who was healed of her plague walked with Jesus as He went to His cross, and that seeing His blood and sweat, she drew out her handkerchief and wiped His brow. Later on, as she reverently caressed the piece of linen, she found the image of the blood-stained face of Jesus imprinted on it. Face cloths for the Roman catacombs alleged to hold the impress of His features were called Veronicas. About A.D.. 320, Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea and a dependable historian records that when he visited Caesarea Philippi, he heard that the woman healed of her issue of blood out of gratitude for her cure had erected two brazen figures at the gate of her house, one representing a woman bending on her knee in supplication—the other, fashioned in the likeness of Jesus, holding out His hand to help her. ⁴

DANIEL WILLIAM TAYLOR

I love this story. Jairus asks Jesus to heal his daughter but on the way a woman with a 12 year history of vaginal bleeding touches him. Jesus stops, heals her and identifies her to the crowd. She is poor, ostracized because of her condition and afraid. Jewish tradition called her unclean, unfit to be in the crowd or touch the hem of Jesus garment. Yet Jesus welcomes her, heals her and tells her "Your faith has made you well, go in peace (shalom) your suffering is over."

Meanwhile, Jairus's daughter, 12 years old, born when the unnamed woman started bleeding, dies. Imagine the angry mutterings in the crowd. Why did he wait? Why bother about this nobody when he should be healing an important leader's daughter? Some I am sure blamed the woman for wasting Jesus time. Instead of healing her and ending her suffering, they wanted to add to it.

Jesus' response contrasts the crowd's lack of faith to that of the woman. "Don't be afraid" he says, "just have faith." Then he goes on to the leader's house and touches his daughter's dead body, once more embracing the unclean and breaking Jewish law. No matter how important her father was, that was forbidden.

Such a profound story that always touch my heart. The way Jesus reaches out to the rich and poor in a single sweeping expression of his ability to heal is awe inspiring. The fact that both are women and unclean is amazing. We never know the names of either the woman or the child, but we are aware that in this moment they are sisters embraced and welcomed together into the family of God.

Such a hope giving story. Names matter but the unnamed matter too. These unnamed women Jesus healed are obviously special. Jesus notices the most insignificant and seemly rejected of our society. The poor and ostracized, the marginalized whose names we never know matter, so do the rich and powerful. All are included in his embrace. He not only heals and restores them but welcomes them into the same family together. And in this family, none are insignificant. They all are known by name. That is truly an expression of shalom and of the unconditional love of God.

MARK 5:25-29 (THE MESSAGE)

A woman who had suffered a condition of hemorrhaging for twelve years—a long succession of physicians had treated her, and treated her badly, taking all her money and leaving her worse off than before—had heard about Jesus. She slipped in from behind and touched his robe. She was thinking to herself, "If I can put a finger on his robe, I can get well." The moment she did it, the flow of blood dried up. She could feel the change and knew her plague was over and done with.

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



COME TOUCH THE ROBE
BY PEPPER CHOPLIN

youtu.be/MPJ2vE29PSI





RESPONSE

Stop for a moment and think about the nameless people in your neighborhood, society and our world. Are they the homeless people on our city streets, the elderly person next door or the refugees, now over 65 million that populate makeshift camps on the borders of Syria and other worn torn countries. How do you respond when they reach out to touch the hem of your garment for comfort and healing? In what ways do you help to alleviate their pain and suffering. In what ways could your actions add to their pain?

We are all amongst the rich and powerful in this world. Yet like Jairus's daughter we feel nameless at times. We resent Jesus favoring those at the margins. We wonder if his stopping along the way to heal someone else will mean we will be overlooked or die as a result.

How do you feel when God seems to favor others and neglect your needs? Do you feel hurt, resentful, angry, or unimportant to God? Sit quietly for few moments reminding yourself "by your faith you are healed". Allow God's love to wash over you and cleanse you.



CLOSING PRAYER

Lord may we seek to be like you and be willing to reach out to both the rich and the poor. May we especially be willing to stop for the nameless ones around us, embrace them and acknowledge the healing of your touch in their lives.

BEAR FRUIT THAT WILL LAST

*God may we go out
and bear fruit
fit for the season
in which it ripens.
Let us savor its flavor,
and enjoy its sweetness.
God may we go out
into your world
and bear fruit,
fruit that will last
as long as you intend it to.
Fruit that will nourish,
sustain and grow us
in the ways
you have prepared it for.
God may we go out
into your world and bear fruit
fit for the kingdom of God.*

“ Nothing great is created suddenly, any more than a bunch of grapes or a fig. If you tell me that you desire a fig. I answer you that there must be time. Let it first blossom, then bear fruit, then ripen.⁵

EPICETETUS

I love the short strawberry season in Seattle. The fruit is so succulent and delicious I wish it would last forever. Tom and I relish the fresh berries picked daily from the garden. And I have to pick them every day because strawberries quickly spoil. They are meant to be savored and enjoyed immediately. Yet we want them to last. Not only do they taste good, but they are nutritional powerhouses containing high levels of vitamin as well as mighty antioxidants which have protective effects against certain types of cancer.

What does “fruit that will last” really mean? I realize as I pick my strawberries that they may only have a short life span but they last as long as God intends them to. They last until the next berries – usually the blueberries – are ripe. They are the first berries of spring and give us that early boost of energy our bodies need, at the time that we need it. Yes we can dry them, freeze them or make preserves which maintain a goodly portion of the nutrients, but they never taste as good or provide as much nutrition as when they are in season.

Strawberries herald the beginning of the harvest season with lots of other berries and perishable fruit to follow. We don’t need them to be stored for long periods of time, unlike apples and pears, which are harvested in autumn, at the end of the season, don’t perish quickly and can be stored as food for the long months of winter. Historically, fruit that could be stored would hopefully last throughout the hungry seasons of winter and early spring when no new fruit was produced.

In a world that picks green and sprays with chemicals to extend the shelf life of everything from strawberries to apples, the significance of fruit that will last is often lost on us. So much “fresh” produce in our supermarkets, is not fresh at all. It lasts far beyond its intended life because of the artificial chemicals sprayed on it. Some fruit is injected with sugar and even vitamins to make it taste more “natural”.

How often we do the same thing with our spiritual fruit. We pick it green before God really intends us to and then try to make it look good to eat with artificial additives. Or we try to preserve it beyond its intended shelf life. We think that “fruit that will last” means it will go on for ever and so we do all we can to artificially preserve it beyond its natural season.

JOHN 15:16 (THE MESSAGE)

“You didn’t choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit, fruit that won’t spoil. As fruit bearers, whatever you ask the Father in relation to me, he gives you”.

GALATIANS 5:22-23(NLT)

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



HOLY SPIRIT LIVING BREATH OF GOD

BY KEITH AND KRISTYN GETTY

youtu.be/N8FKZlZ97AU



WALK THE PILGRIM PATH

*Walk with us Lord
through all the twists
and turns of life,
on the journey out
and homeward bound.
Walk with us Lord,
When clouds obscure the way,
and what once seemed close
now looks so far away.
Walk with us Lord,
as we cast aside our prejudices,
and gain your new ideas.
Walk with us Lord,
until we trust in you,
and walk onwards
along the pilgrim's way.*



“ The old pilgrims never returned to their own land and homestead without having lost a prejudice and gained a new idea instead. This is an attitude of life which constantly seeks new enlightenment, carries with it new won experiences and allows life to be influenced by it.⁶

ARNE BAKKEN

Last year I stepped down from my position as CEO of Mustard Seed Associates. A couple of months prior to my transition I flew to Colorado. It was a wonderful week in which I renewed old friendships, made new ones and breathed in the beauty of God's glorious creation. Along the way I conducted a couple of seminars, walked several labyrinths and enjoyed rich fellowship with my fellow travelers. It was an enlightening adventure, a pilgrimage that helped me to shed a little more of my cultural and religious prejudices and sent me home with new perceptions and understandings of life, faith and the world around me.

What made it a pilgrimage rather than an ordinary plane trip you may ask? My perceptions. On this trip I was looking for new insights and understanding. The transitions I was going through as I released my leadership position in Mustard Seed Associates challenged me to reevaluate every area of my life.

There were lots of questions I wanted answers to as I traveled. What are my goals for the next five years? Where have I allowed non essentials to clutter my life and weigh me down on God's journey? What are the new things God is speaking to me about that I have not noticed because I am bound by routines and habits that have become inflexible? As you can imagine I did not find answers to these questions in one week. I came home to continue my pilgrimage.

We are all pilgrims, on a journey towards a closer relationship with God and our neighbors. This is an attitude of life rather than a special journey, though special journeys to holy sites or even to places off our usual path, often propel us into that mode of living in which we constantly seek the enlightenment we need to be transformed. It is a journey that prompts us to sort through our spiritual possessions and strip down to the faith essentials on a regular basis. In the Middle Ages people who could not afford to go on pilgrimage often used labyrinths as a substitute. Walking a labyrinth, like a physical journey encourages us to question our lives and seek new insights.

Every time we step out of our homes, or move away from our comfort zones we have the potential to embark on a pilgrimage, an experience that can transform our lives into a journey of enlightenment if only we will allow it to.

All we need to do is change our perceptions so that we are open to transformation. So walk slowly, look around intently and listen closely to all you see and everyone you meet.

PSALM 84: 5-7 (NIV)

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.*

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



**TO BE A PILGRIM
BY JOHN BUNYAN**

youtu.be/5yHJMPw8RHU



STRENGTHENING OUR BACKBONES

*We believe and trust in God our creator,
Who made us to be neighbors together,
brothers and sisters
from every tribe and nation and culture.
We believe and trust in Christ our redeemer,
Who save us
from self-centeredness and isolation,
To be joined together as one body,
that loves and cares for each other.
We believe and trust in the Spirit our enabler,
Who calls us to be one family,
With rich and poor, disabled and whole,
With young and old, oppressed and despised.
We believe and trust in the triune God
Creator, redeemer, enabler,
Who welcomes us home
into the eternal world,
Where justice and love will reign forever.
We believe and trust in God's new world coming
Where one day, together with sisters and brothers
from all nations
We will be healed and made whole
to become all that God intends us to be.*

“ I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

APOSTLES CREED

I still vividly remember visiting my mother after she had back surgery for a collapsed spine. A steel rod in her back strengthened the spine and returned some of its youthful vitality. She looked years younger, her face was less stressed and she gained two inches in height. Watching her walk straight and tall for the first time in years was wonderful. It was sobering to realize however that none of the four doctors in the family had noticed the severity of her problem.

Have we too lost our backbones and no one has noticed? Has the strength and vitality of our faith collapsed diminishing us to a mere shell of what God intends us to be? What provides the iron and steel so we stand straight and tall in the presence of God and of those around us?

Plants don't have backbones, but often, like the wisteria in today's photo, need external supports like trellises, fences or stakes for them to reach full growth. One way to give zest and vigor to our faith and strengthen our spiritual backbones is by exploring the ancient church creeds, those external supports

that have kept so many strong in their faith for centuries. We can use these to create our own personal creeds.

The less confident we are of our core beliefs, the more likely we are to focus on practices like drinking, smoking or same sex marriages, to define us. Whether we call God father, mother or Eternal One, are not central to our faith but we often act as though they are. It is these non-essentials that separate us from other believers. They become our litmus tests for who is and who isn't acceptable to God.

Today's prayer is my personal creed, adapted from the Apostles' Creed, the oldest creedal statement we have. Possibly created by the apostles themselves, though the earliest record of it is from 390 AD. My own creed provides a statement that I can return to whenever I feel insecure in my faith. Its a little like a calling statement but with more detail about what I believe rather than what I want to do with my life.

1 TIMOTHY 6:12-14 (THE VOICE)

Fight the good fight of the faith! Cling to the eternal life you were called to when you confessed the good confession before witnesses. Before God—the life-giving Creator of all things—and Jesus the Anointed, our Liberating King, who made the good confession to Pontius Pilate, I urge you: keep His commandment. Have a spotless, indisputable record until our Lord Jesus the Anointed appears to set this world straight.

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



CREED

BY JOHN MICHAEL TALBOT

youtu.be/_q6G7r-0Fsl



BRIDGING THE GAP

*Breathe deeply,
Look closely,
Listen carefully.
Stand barefoot on the earth.
Lift your hands to touch the heavens.
Rejoice in what is visible,
Reach for the invisible.
Yearn for the purposes of God.
Breathe deeply,
Look closely,
Listen carefully.
Anchor yourself in the past.
Rest secure in the promise of the future.
Let God's love bridge the gap,
between the now and not yet.
Be open to change.
Breathe deeply,
Look closely,
Listen carefully.
Let God's truth flow,
between present realities,
and future hopes.
Let the holiness of God,
refresh and challenge,
All you are and all you will become.*



"Wherever there is a wall, there is a closed heart. We need bridges, not walls!"

POPE FRANCIS

When my husband Tom and I go on retreat, we sometimes take the ferry across to Whidbey Island, drive up the island and over Deception Pass. We stop at the twin bridges that connect Whidbey and Fidalgo Islands. They are often shrouded in fog and we cannot see from one end to the other. Sometimes they shine in the brilliant sunlight illuminating the beauty of the surrounding forests.

As we settle into our retreat space in Anacortes, images of the bridge often revolve in my mind. It is not the beauty of the scene, but the bridge itself that holds my attention. It is a strong steel structure, firmly anchored to the rock on both sides. It stands high above the deep and treacherous waters below. Unlike the channel itself which takes skill and experience to navigate, it can be crossed easily by anyone.

I love to look down into the swirling icy water that flows through Deception Pass. The tidal flow and whirlpools move quickly leading to standing waves, large whirlpools, and roiling eddies. Boats can often be seen waiting on either side of the pass for the current to stop or change direction before going through. Thrill-seeking kayakers go there during large tide changes to surf the standing waves and brave the rapid conditions.

Sometimes bridges are not as well anchored as they should be. In 2013, the I-5 Skagit River Bridge near Mt Vernon collapsed sending several cars into the river below. Fortunately the cars remained on the flooded bridge and no one was injured.

Bridges in our faith are important too as they span the gap

between where we have been and where we are going. They help us break down the barriers that confine our growth and disconnect us from those who are different from us. They help us move into the future together.

Like physical bridges, they always need to be sturdily constructed, and have strong anchors in order to be effective. Here too, they often help us cross treacherous waters to the future without effort or mishap. They provide a sure path even when we cannot see where the bridge ends and the security of solid ground once more guides our journey.

HEBREWS 6:18-20 (NLT)

So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God's inner sanctuary. Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



**BRIDGE OVERTROUBLED WATERS
BY SIMON AND GARFUNKEL**

youtu.be/jjNgn4r6SOA



A HIDDEN WHOLENESS



*God bring us to wholeness.
Let us complete what you have started,
and nurture the seeds of life
in all people and all things.
May we bring to birth
love, compassion, generosity,
your image within us, within others,
now planted in embryo form.
Root them, grow them,
enable them to flourish.
Put to death what is not of you.
Nourish the child of new creation,
let your wholeness emerge.
Burst through our hardened hearts,
with resurrection life.*

“ Wholeness does not mean perfection: it means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life. Knowing this gives me hope that human wholeness — mine, yours, ours — need not be a Utopian dream, if we can use devastation as a seedbed for new life.

PARKER PALMER

The idea that there lies within all of us the seeds of God's wholeness is both heart warming and challenging. This wholeness is the image of God which lies dormant within us, the hidden child of God's new creation of love and peace and mutuality. It is alive in embryo form within all of us, living and growing. Allowing it to be birthed and grow to wholeness is a deliberate choice, one that means accepting and being reconciled to who God is and what has been planted within all of us - the image of a God who is love and peace and generosity and caring.

Making the choice to allow this wholeness to emerge, Palmer argues, requires us to create spaces within ourselves and between us and others where the soul feels safe enough to show up and make its claim on our lives.

Sometimes we don't want to be reconciled to God's image. I know there are times when I would rather be selfish than loving. I want to hold onto what God asks me to share. Sometimes I resent the emerging image of God. I look back to the leeks and garlic of Egypt with longing and wish that I could go back to a self centered life where I care only about myself. To allow God's wholeness to emerge means putting to death all that resists the ways of God. It is a struggle of denial.

Mohandas K. Gandhi reminds us that as human beings, our greatness lies not so much in being able to remake the world... as in being able to remake ourselves. We do not really remake ourselves. It is the spirit of God

working within us that remakes us. We can be changed. Selfishness become generosity. Anxiety becomes trust. Hate becomes love. Like the Apostle John we can all be transformed from sons or daughters of thunder to apostles of Love.

ROMANS 12: 1-2 (NLT)

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



**YOU ARE MY WHOLENESS
BY HENRY WIENS**

youtu.be/gfCS3bWNxy8



THE BLESSING OF LOVE

*Love is God's heart.
Let us immerse ourselves in its holy presence.
May it abide deep within our hearts,
flow through our veins
and flood our souls.
Love is God's promise.
Drink it in
through scripture words,
and silent moments.
Share it out,
in compassion and generosity and caring.
Love is God's language.
Let us learn to speak it fluently.
Love never ends.*

“ Nothing is more practical than finding God,
that is, falling in love in a quite absolute final way.
What you are in love with,
what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.
It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,
what you will do with your evenings,
how you will spend your weekends,
what you will read, who you know,
what breaks your heart,
what amazes you with joy and gratitude.
Fall in love, stay in love
and it will decide everything

FATHER PEDRO ARRIVE S.J 1907-1991

My friend Kim loves to collect heart shaped rocks, and when I walked along the beach with her this last summer, I got into the spirit of it. What surprised me is how many heart shaped rocks there are around, nestled in amongst other shapes and sized. I never noticed them until I started looking however.

Looking for heart shaped rocks is a little like looking for the love of God. We often don't noticed it, nestled down into the crevasses of our lives until we start to very deliberately look for it. It hovers over us like a canopy of warmth and protection. It walks beside us like an embrace of friendship and comfort. It penetrates inside us like a flame igniting the God presence within.

Love is more than a warm fuzzy feeling however, it cannot be expressed in isolation from those around us. Love is an action that is lived out as we turn towards others with kindness, compassion, patience and generosity. It ignites our world as it wells up within us and cries out for freedom in the face of injustice and oppression.

The blessings of God can be summed up in one word – love. Living into the blessing of that love which dwells above, around and within is the journey of our lives. The journey towards God is a journey towards unconditional love, towards belonging and towards a meaningful life.

EPHESIANS 3:16-19 (NLT)

I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

SUGGESTED MUSIC AS YOU REFLECT



GOD IS LOVE

youtu.be/6aKBtuakKWo



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CHRISTINE SINE is the founder and ongoing contributor to Godspace, which grew out of her passion for creative spirituality, gardening and sustainability. Christine describes herself as a

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She is the author of several other books, *To Garden with God* (MSA 2010), *Light for the Journey* (MSA 2010), *Godspace: Time for Peace in the Rhythms of Life* (Barclay Press 2006), *Travel Well* (World Vision Resources 2005), and *Tales of a Seasick Doctor* (Zondervan 1996). Christine and her husband Tom, also co-authored *Living on Purpose: Finding God's Best for Your Life* (Baker Books 2002).

You can visit godspace-msa.com for more spiritual resources and weekly blog posts from Christine.