



Winter 2020 Discipleship Group Materials



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Introduction

Writing in the 5th century, St. Augustine famously declared: “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” A deep sense of longing seems to be an intrinsic part of being human. We long to be known, to be loved, to have purpose. And sometimes we are not even sure what we long for—our hearts are indeed “restless.” We all have our own ways of trying to satisfy this longing, or at least, of distracting ourselves from it: busyness, entertainment, material comforts, working, socializing... the options are endless. But if St. Augustine is right, we will not find true satisfaction until we have a deep experience of God.

We know such an experience is not something we can manufacture by our force of will, but there are practices people down through the ages have found helpful in opening their hearts and minds to the presence of God. Two such practices are fasting for a season and simplicity as an approach to life. Fasting and simplicity may conjure up feelings of asceticism and joylessness—like the diets and spending limits many of us feel we need after the holiday season! But fasting and simplicity can actually be liberating as they help us to minimize that which doesn’t satisfy, and to identify and focus on what is fulfilling and life-giving. The focus of this series is therefore not on giving up things we enjoy, but on gaining more of what truly satisfies.

In the first three weeks of this series, we will look at this topic in general as we explore the concepts of hunger, thirst and satisfaction. Then, for the following four weeks, we will learn from the wisdom of people who have dedicated their lives to experiencing more of God in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. By exploring what we really need and long for, we seek to discover together that in a world where there is never enough—time, money, success, love... God is more, so much more than enough!

Overview

The seven weeks of the series will cover the following themes:

- *January 12: Satisfaction*
Practicing self-compassion as we let go of fears and distractions to embrace the rich, fulfilling life Jesus offers.
- *January 19: Hunger*
Reordering our priorities and fasting from addictive distractions; continually returning to Jesus for our sense of identity and meaning.
- *January 26: Thirst*
Listening to our thirst to identify what is missing from our lives; and deepening our relationship with the source of living water.

- *February 2: Brother Lawrence*
Learning to experience God in the simple, practical activities and interactions of everyday life.
- *February 9: St. Thérèse of Lisieux*
Accepting “insignificance” in others’ eyes, and expressing God’s love through small acts of kindness and consideration.
- *February 16: Howard Thurman*
Awareness of the emotional complexity within us that causes violent responses, and a commitment to practicing non-violence in everyday life.
- *February 23: Eugene Peterson*
Understanding it is the lifelong practice of following Jesus that brings deep satisfaction; and our need for commitment and faithfulness over the long term.

Practicalities

In this packet you will find specific discussion questions for the first 3 weeks of the series. For the following 4 weeks, there are just a few generic questions, together with excerpts from the writings of the featured person for that week. You may wish to read the excerpts together in your group meeting, or to read them in advance and arrive ready to discuss them.

The materials assume you have heard the message for the week, so if you were not able to be at Cedar Ridge that Sunday, please listen or watch the message online (www.crcc.org/listen-to-messages/) or via the Cedar Ridge app (text Cedarridge App to 77977 for a link to download the app).

The point of this series is not to discuss ideas about experiencing more of God, but to actually experience more of God! This takes intentionality throughout the week. Practices are included for each week, and we strongly encourage everyone to prioritize these simple reflections and activities.

To help us remember to engage with and reflect on these practices, we have included space in this book for journaling. Journaling can help us to slow down enough to attend to our thoughts and feelings, and can help us open up space for God. Those of us who are task-oriented may find the “fill in the blanks” style helpful to stay engaged throughout the week. Those of us who are more spontaneous may want to write or draw between the lines, in the margins—or anywhere else for that matter! The point is not to “complete the exercise” but to make time and space to rest in God’s presence.

We all have different personalities and experiences, and can therefore expect to find some practices and examples more helpful than others. At the end of this packet, you will find an annex that lists suggestions for additional reading on various aspects of this series.

Additional Activities

MLK Jr. Day Event—*Monday, January 20, 7-8:30 PM*

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” We will mark Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day by engaging with the issue of racial injustice in public education. Join us in the auditorium for a documentary screening and time for table discussions. This will be followed by an overview of relevant current state-level legislation, and an opportunity to make your voice heard by writing postcards to key decision makers. Light refreshments will be served and childcare provided. Everybody welcome!

Creative Cup Coffeehouse—*Saturday, February 1, 7-9:30 PM*

Concluding the week titled “Thirst,” we will hold our annual Creative Cup Coffeehouse! Join us for an evening of creativity and artistic expression. Enjoy community enriched through live music, an open mic, and art exhibits. Coffee and desserts will be served, and there will be craft activities for children. The event is free of charge and everyone is very welcome, so please invite friends and neighbors to join us.

Winter Discipleship Series 2020
More Than Enough—Learning From Our Longing

Week 1: Satisfaction

When we consider the notion that “God is more than enough,” two sentiments often seem to surface. One is doubt: in what way can “God” be satisfying? How can religion, faith, spirituality (or whatever we choose to call it!) really lead us to deeper meaning and satisfaction in life? We know it is supposed to, but religious practice often feels abstract and removed from our real lives. We dutifully uphold sacred texts that speak of an experience that we find hard to relate to. We honor characters through history who seem to have embodied this kind of life, but secretly we wonder if such piety is even desirable, let alone doable. The other sentiment is fear: what if we pursue this life and but find it futile? What if we give up certain things we already have in order to embrace a deeper life, only to find disappointment? What if even believing a more fulfilling life is possible turns out to be a big mistake—what if there isn’t more, what if there isn’t enough? And yet in all this doubt and fear, we all seem to share still another sentiment—we long for more! In all of us is deep conviction (or at least perhaps a sneaking suspicion) that there really is more to life, and we have even glimpsed and tasted it at times such that we know it is there, even though it seems to so easily slip through our fingers.

Jesus invites us into just this kind of rich, fulfilling life. The way of Jesus is not about pressure to stop doing the things we enjoy to live a life of pious austerity. Rather it is about letting go of what doesn’t really satisfy in order to receive what is ultimately much more deeply meaningful and satisfying—losing our lives to really find them! In this introductory week, we look at the story of Jesus’ encounter with a wealthy young man who desperately desires this kind of life but is too attached to the life he already has. Jesus does not judge this man, but feels deep compassion for him. We will endeavor to extend the same compassion to ourselves as we explore what holds us back—our fears and distractions, and our difficulty in experiencing life in ways that transcend our senses. We will look at ways we can grow in this art of life through changing practices and habits, giving up things that hinder rather than help, and responding to hardships that are beyond our control.

This week’s discussion questions

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that was new or surprising? Was there anything that seemed particularly timely or appropriate to a situation you are facing?

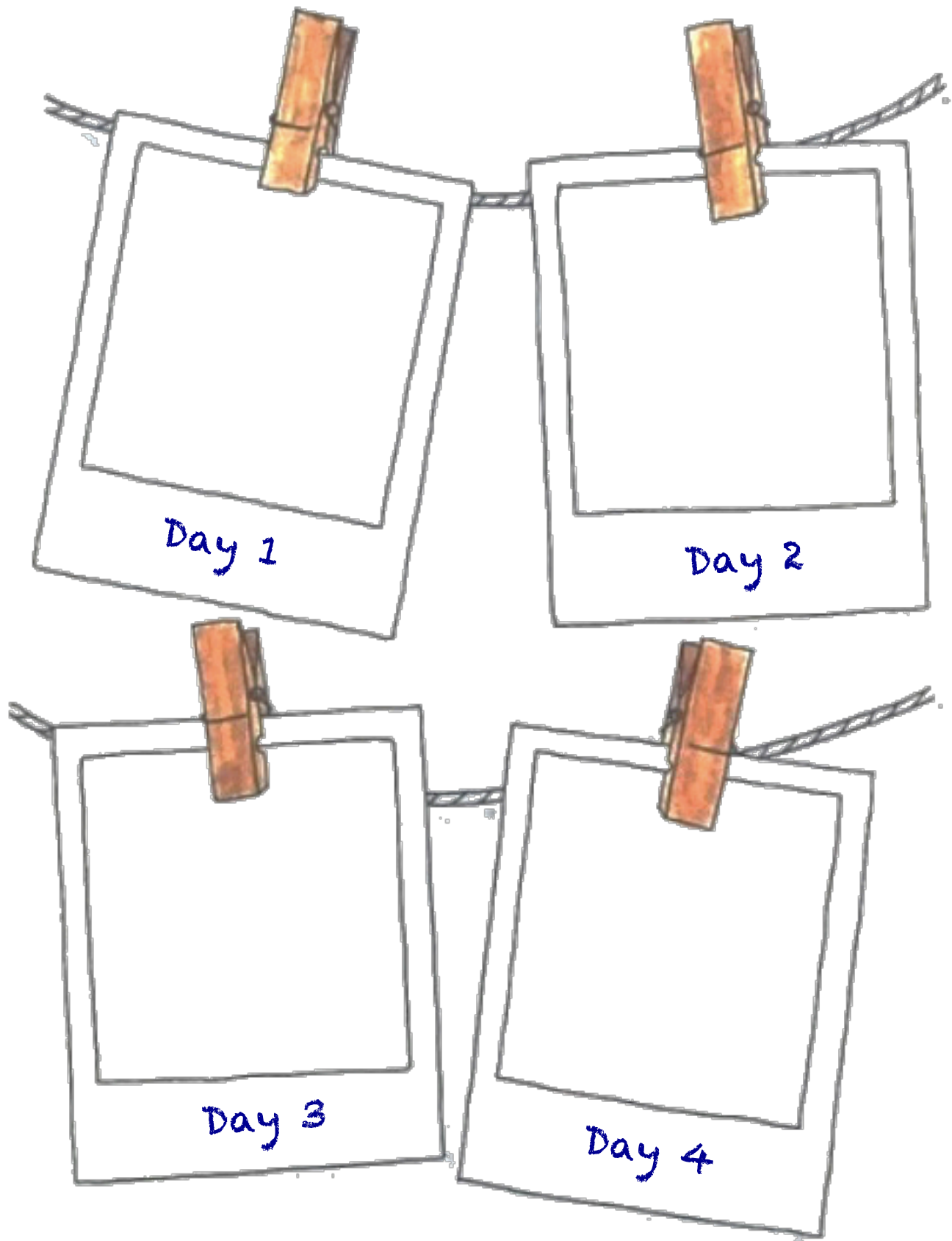
2. Describe a time when your life has felt meaningful and satisfying. What brought this meaning? In what ways (if at all) do you see this relating to your journey of faith?
3. Read Mark 10:17-27 and discuss the following:
 - a. How would you describe Jesus' attitude towards the man in the story?
 - b. Why do you think Jesus addresses his money issues?
 - c. Why do you think the selective list of commandments that Jesus recounts are all ones concerning how we treat other people?
 - d. Why do you think this man walks away sad?
 - e. In what ways do you identify with the person in the story?
 - f. In what ways might Jesus' statement "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" apply to you?
4. The speaker on Sunday suggested three factors that seem to hold us back, like the man in the above story. Discuss each of them and share as honestly as you feel able about how they apply to you.
 - a. *Fear*: We can be afraid to let go of what we have (even when it doesn't satisfy) for fear that there is nothing more than this.
 - b. *Distractions*: We are lured into hoping and believing other things can bring us ultimate love, joy, peace and freedom. Some of these are positive, but often they are negative habits and addictions.
 - c. *Disappointment*: We are sensual beings and use our senses in every minute of every day. Some (not all) of a more meaningful experience of life is found in ways that transcend our senses, and we find this challenging to practice. We may have tried but feel we've failed or lost heart.
 - d. What else might be holding you back?
5. This discussion might be more comfortable in smaller groups. Feel free to break up as seems appropriate to share about the following:
 - a. What practices or activities have helped you have a more meaningful experience of God? In what ways have they been truly satisfying to you? How could you include these more in your life?
 - b. What practices or habits currently hinder you or are simply unhelpful? What do you need to do to let go of these?
 - c. What struggles are you currently experiencing? In what way do these challenges get in the way of you experiencing meaning and satisfaction? In what ways could you perhaps let these challenges have a positive force in your life?
 - d. Spend some time praying for one another to close this time of sharing.

Practice for the week: A Way of Self-Compassion

The goal for this week is to spend more time doing something you find genuinely meaningful and that you feel brings you closer to God. Set aside some time early in the week to consider the following:

- Choose something from what you shared in 5a above, and commit to practicing it more this week.
- Don't set your bar too high! Depending on what the practice is, every day might not be realistic. Aim for about 4 times this week.
- Don't judge yourself, but have compassion. Don't worry about whether the practice seems deeply spiritual or pious. Just choose a simple pleasure you know works for you and draws you closer to God.
- Determine what you need to let go of to make room for this. What space do you need to create? What distractions do you need to remove?
- Plan the times for this practice (be specific) and enjoy! Make a note of your experience on the Week 1 Journal Page overleaf.

Week 1 Journal Page



Winter Discipleship Series 2020
More Than Enough—Learning From Our Longing

Week 2: Hunger

Many of us have never experienced chronic food shortages or life-threatening dehydration, but we all know what it feels like to hunger and thirst. These healthy physical impulses—although often unpleasant—drive us to seek out what we need to survive. Similarly, we all know what it is to “hunger” for meaning in life, although the form that longing takes is unique to each of us. This spiritual hunger directs us to what we need if we are to lead full and healthy lives. Jesus declared himself “the bread of life” and promised all who come to him “will never go hungry” (John 6:35), but what does it really mean to find satisfaction in Jesus? In this second week, we look at how Jesus provides us with a sense of identity and belonging, a purpose in life, and an opportunity to grow.

Jesus also pronounced blessing on all who “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” and instructed his followers to prioritize, not physical food and drink, but the pursuit of God’s justice and goodness on earth. Jesus promised that all who kept hungering after this “righteousness” would find satisfaction. But so often we relegate our relationship with God and the pursuit of righteousness to a lower priority as we seek fulfillment through money, careers, relationships, religion, entertainment, or any number of other things. Like junk food, these pursuits can be additive, leaving us undernourished and unsatisfied. Through fasting from one or more of these competing priorities, we can lessen the addition and make time and space to deepen our focus on God, who is more than enough.

This week’s discussion questions

1. What stood out to you from the message this past Sunday? Was there anything that was new or surprising? Was there anything you agree with in principle, but find hard to put into practice?
2. Reflecting on your life at the moment, what would you say you most hunger for?
3. Read John 6:30-35 and 41-42. The people wanted Jesus to provide them with physical bread to show he is sent from God, but Jesus gives another kind of answer.
 - a. What do you think Jesus meant by calling himself “the bread of life”?
 - b. In what ways does Jesus satisfy hunger and thirst?
 - c. Why did the people reject Jesus?
4. Read Matthew 6:31-33 and reflect on the following questions:

- a. Why does Jesus say material needs should not be our priority in life?
 - b. The speaker on Sunday said the word “righteousness” in the gospel of Matthew meant both goodness and justice. What do you think it mean to seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness?
 - c. How might this provide real “food” for us?
5. Read Matthew 5:3-6. Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled. What do you think this means?
6. Taking some time reflecting on your own life. This discussion might be more comfortable in smaller groups. Feel free to break up as seems appropriate to share about the following:
 - a. How does Jesus satisfy hunger in your own life? Are there areas where this is not the case? Why do you think that is?
 - b. Are there other pursuits through which you find a sense of identify and belonging, growth and purpose? Do these help or hinder you as you seek God’s kingdom and righteousness?
 - c. Is there anything that it might be good for you to give up for a season to make space and time to focus more on God?
 - d. Take some time to pray for one another about what you have shared.

Practice for the week: A Digital Detox

We live in a society where technology is ubiquitous. While it has brought many conveniences and can be a useful tool, many types of technology usage are also linked to depression, anxiety, overstimulation, and compulsive behavior. (For more on the negative impacts of technology misuse, see <https://healthyhildegard.com/digital-detox/>) A digital detox allows us to “unplug” and temporarily escape the demands and distractions of technology.

There are many ways to partially or temporarily detox or fast from technology. Select one that is challenging but feasible for you from the list below and try to maintain this practice for several days, or even all week.

- Abstain from all social media, or limit use to a set time each day
- Cut out TV and movies
- Switch off all screens for an hour (or two) before going to bed
- Leave your phone at home when you go out; or—when you are home—leave it in a designated place, rather than having it constantly in reach. Limit the number of times you check it.

How might you use the time freed up by this practice to do something you feel brings you closer to God? Note your thoughts and feelings on the Week 2 Journal Page overleaf.

Week 2 Journal Page

Selected digital detox practice:

For each day, note how you feel about limiting your technology intake, and how you have filled the time.

Monday

Wednesday

Tuesday

Friday

Thursday

Saturday

Sunday

Winter Discipleship Series 2020

More Than Enough—Learning From Our Longing

Week 3: Thirst

Water accounts for 50-70% of our body weight, and is needed for almost everything we do. Even a small drop in hydration can impact our mood, attention, memory and motor coordination. Thirst is an indicator that our body is lacking something that is absolutely essential for life. Hebrew Scripture is filled with metaphorical imagery of thirst and water—unsurprisingly, since it was written by people living in hot, arid climates without the convenience and security of running water. Water is presented as essential to life and growth, necessary for cleansing, and a source of refreshment. God is described as “the spring of living water.” Water sources—particularly wells—provide the setting for romance in the lives of many Jewish heroes.

Against this rich background, Jesus offers “living water” to a woman shunned by her own community, and considered unclean by Jesus’ disciples. Jesus recognizes in her a raging thirst that he alone can satisfy. Similarly, in the crowded temple courts—during a festival that featured water as a powerful symbol for the Jewish law as the way to abundant life in relationship with God—Jesus preposterously announces that *he* is the source of living water! This theme continues through the Christian Scriptures, culminating in the apocalyptic vision in the book of Revelation, where Jesus declares, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.” During this third week, we will explore what Jesus means by this promise of free living water, and the importance of his focus on an intimate relationship, rather than on religious practice or effort.

This week’s discussion questions

1. What insights did you gain from the message this past Sunday? What was most helpful for you? What was difficult for you? Did anything strike you as particularly relevant to your life right now?
2. Read Psalm 63:1-5. How do you feel when you read this song of praise to God? Would you describe the psalmist as “religious” or “relatable”?
3. Have there been times in your own life where you have felt a longing for God, akin to a raging thirst?

4. Read John 4:5-42, and discuss the following questions:
 - What is unusual about Jesus asking this woman for a drink?
 - If you knew the woman had had 5 husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband, how would you feel towards her?
 - How do you see this woman's attitude towards Jesus changing during the course of this conversation? What do you think accounts for this change?
 - There are some small, but potentially poignant, details in this story. What do you make of the following:
 - The setting was Jacob's well
 - It was about the sixth hour
 - She left her water jar at the well
5. Read John 7:37-39. What is similar and what is different between Jesus' offer of living water here and in John 4?
6. Break into groups of 2 or 3 to share about the following:
 - The woman at the well seemed to experience a range of emotions from guarded suspicion to confusion, to wonder and trust. How would you describe your current feelings towards Jesus? Why do you feel this way?
 - What change—if any—would you like to see in your relationship with Jesus?
 - Spend some time praying for one another to close this time of sharing.

Practice for the week: Water Reflections

This week, drink a glass of water each day slowly and reflectively. Imagine living in a hot, arid place where water is hard to find. How would this water feel to you if you had a raging thirst? Consider the importance of water, for our bodies, for agriculture, for maintaining hygiene. Think of times you have experienced joy or relaxation in or near water.

As you reflect, ask God to reveal to you any areas of your life in need of living water

- To satisfy your thirst
- To wash you clean
- To bring refreshment
- To stimulate growth

Record your thoughts on the Week 3 Journal Page.

Week 3 Journal Page



Thirst



Cleansing



Refreshment



Growth

Winter Discipleship Series 2020
More Than Enough—Learning From The Wisdom Of Others

Week 4: Brother Lawrence

Brother Lawrence was born Nicholas Herman around 1610 in France. As a young soldier in the Thirty Years War, he sustained a near fatal injury to his sciatic nerve, which left him crippled and in chronic pain for the rest of his life. At mid-life he entered a monastery in Paris where he became the cook, and later a worker in the sandal repair shop. For 40 years, Brother Lawrence worked quietly in the monastery, performing mundane tasks as acts of prayer. It was not until after his death in 1691 that a few of his letters were collected and published, together with summaries of 4 conversations he had with the archbishop's representative, under the title "The Practice of the Presence of God."

Below are excerpts from that small book. After reading the excerpts, reflect on the following:

- In what ways do you identify with the author?
- How does this approach to experiencing God seem interesting or helpful to you?
- How might you apply this to your own everyday life?

Excerpts

1. From Brother Lawrence's Letters

I read many books containing different methods of going to God and various practices of the spiritual life. These only served to confuse me, rather than facilitate what I sought, which was simply to become wholly God's. So I resolved to give all for the All. First I gave myself completely to God and made restitution for my sins, as much as I could. Then out of love for Him, I renounced everything that was not God. I began to live as if there were no one else in the world but God and me. Sometimes I imagined myself as a poor criminal at the feet of the Divine Judge. At other times I would behold Him in my heart as my Divine Father.

I worshipped Him as often as I could, keeping my mind in His holy Presence. Whenever I noticed that my mind had wandered, I brought it back to Him. I found this very difficult, and yet I continued in the practice, without feeling guilty when my mind wandered involuntarily. I made this my constant exercise all day long, whether it was the appointed time of prayer or not. At all times - every minute of every hour, even at the busiest time of my work - I drove from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of God.

This has been my spiritual practice ever since I entered into this religious community. Even though I have done this practice very imperfectly, I have found it to be very helpful. All benefits from this practice I attribute wholly to the mercy and goodness of God, because we can do nothing without Him. This is certainly true of me more than anyone. When we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy Presence, and set Him always before us, this prevents us from willfully offending and displeasing Him. It also produces within us a holy freedom and (if I may speak so boldly) an intimacy with God, so that we are able to ask, and successfully receive by his grace, anything that we need. In conclusion, by repeating this practice often, it becomes second nature, and the presence of God becomes our normal state of mind.

I had a conversation recently with a person known for his piety. He told me that the spiritual life was a life of grace. He said it begins with servile fear, is increased by hope of eternal life, and is consummated by pure love. He said that each of these states had different stages, through which one arrives finally at that blessed consummation. I have not followed such spiritual approaches. On the contrary, I have instinctively avoided them because I found that they discouraged me. This was why, when I took religious orders, I resolved simply to give myself to God alone and to renounce everything but the love of Him. I considered this to be the best way I could address my sins.

... suddenly I found myself changed. My soul, which until this time had been troubled, felt a profound inward peace. It was as if my soul had found its center and place of rest. Ever since that time I have walked with God simply, in faith, humility and love. I try diligently to do nothing and think nothing which may displease Him. I trust that when I have done everything I can, He will do with me whatever He pleases.

I cannot describe what happens within me now. There is no suffering or difficulty because I have no will but God's will. I attempt to accomplish God's will in all things. I am so surrendered to God that I would not pick up a straw from the ground against His will, or from any other motive but love of Him.

I have stopped practicing all forms of devotion and set prayers, except those which I am obliged to participate in. I make it my practice only to persevere in His holy presence. I do this simply by paying attention to, and directing my affection to, God. I call this the actual presence of God. It is a habitual, silent, and secret communion of the soul with God. This often causes such joys and raptures inwardly, and sometimes also outwardly, that I am forced to make an effort to moderate them to prevent their appearance to others.

Most often my method is a simple attention to God combined with a general sense of hunger for God. I find myself often attached to God with the great sweetness and delight of an infant at the mother's breast. I hesitate to use the expression, but the inexpressible sweetness which I taste and experience there is as if I were at the bosom of God at all times. Sometimes my thoughts wander away from God by necessity or infirmity. But soon an inner desire brings me back to God. This inward yearning is so delightful and delicious that I am ashamed to describe it.

My set hours of prayer are only a continuation of the same exercise I have been describing. Sometimes I consider myself as a stone before a sculptor, who is making a statue. I present myself to God, and I desire Him to make His perfect image in my soul, and make me entirely like Himself. At other times during prayer, I feel all my spirit and all my soul lifted up without any intent or effort on my part. My soul feels as if it were suspended and firmly fixed in God, as in its center and place of rest.

2. From Brother Lawrence's Spiritual Maxims

The Presence of God is our spirit in contact with God. It is a realization that God is present, made known to us either by the imagination or the understanding.

I have a friend who has been practicing the realization of the Presence of God through understanding for forty years. He gives it many names. Sometimes he calls it a Simple Act, or a clear and distinct knowledge of God. At other times he refers to it as seeing through a glass, a loving gaze, or an inward sense of God. He also calls it waiting on God, a silent conversation with Him, a rest in Him, or the life and peace of the Soul. My friend tells me that all these ways of expressing the sense of the Presence of God comes to the same thing: Presence fills his soul very naturally.

He says that by unceasing effort, by continually bringing his mind back to the Presence of God, a habit

has formed within him. As soon as he is finished with his daily work, and even while he is doing his work, his soul lifts itself up above all earthly concerns, without any effort or thought by him. It dwells firmly fixed on God as its center and place of rest. Faith is almost always his companion at such times. Then his soul's joy is complete. This is what he calls Actual Presence, and includes all other types and much more. At such times he feels that there is only God and him in the world. He holds unbroken communion with God, asking Him to supply all his needs, and finding fullness of joy in His Presence.

Let us understand well that this fellowship with God happens in the depth of one's being. It is there that the soul speaks to God, heart to heart. A great and profound peace comes over the soul during this communion. Everything that is happening on the outside does not concern the soul. The outside world is like a brush fire, flaring up briefly and quickly burning itself out. Rarely do the cares of this world intrude to disrupt the peace that is within.

Coming back to our consideration of the Presence of God, you must know that the tender and loving light of God's countenance kindles a divine fire of love for God within the soul that ardently embraces it. This fire is so great that one is compelled to control the outward expression of feelings.

We would be very surprised if we knew what conversation the soul has with God at these times. God seems to delight in this communion with our soul to such an extent that He bestows innumerable blessings, in order to ensure that the soul will abide with Him forever. It is almost as if He feared that the soul would turn away from Him again to things of earth. Therefore He provides for it lavishly. The soul finds divine nourishment in faith beyond its highest thought and desire; this is a boundless joy. All this takes place without any effort from the soul beyond simple consent.

The Presence of God is the life and nourishment of the soul. With the aid of His grace, it can attain this Presence through the conscientious exercise of the practices which I will now put forth. The first practice is purity of life. We are to guard ourselves carefully, lest we do or say or think anything which might be displeasing to God. When any such thing happens, then it is important to repent of it immediately, humbly asking His forgiveness. The second is faithfulness in the practice of His Presence. We are to keep the soul's gaze fixed on God in faith - calmly, humbly, and lovingly, without allowing the appearance of anxious thoughts and emotions. Make it your practice, before beginning any task, to look to God, even if it is just for a moment. Look to God while you doing any activity and also after you have completed it. It takes much time and patience to perfect this practice, so do not be discouraged by failure. This habit is only developed with much difficulty. Yet when it is achieved, how great will be your joy!

Think often on God, by day, by night, in your business, and even in your diversions. He is always near you and with you; leave Him not alone. You would think it rude to leave a friend alone who came to visit you; why, then, must God be neglected? Do not, then, forget Him, but think on Him often, adore Him continually, live and die with Him; this is the glorious employment of a Christian. In a word, this is our profession; if we do not know it, we must learn it.

Practice for the week: Practice the Presence of God

Experiment with practicing the presence of God this week. Develop the habit of returning to God even in the midst of your daily tasks. Setting a regular chime on your phone or strategically placing post-it notes can help serve as a reminder to return to an awareness of God's presence. Praying a brief breath prayer or the Lord's Prayer, expressing gratitude, or simply thinking about one aspect of what God is like may be helpful during these moments.

Week 4 Journal Page

At the end of each day, think about how you practiced the presence of God. In the space below, note the frequency or nature of your return to an awareness of God's presence. Do you notice any patterns? Are there times or circumstances that help or hinder you from being aware of God's presence?



Winter Discipleship Series 2020
More Than Enough—Learning From The Wisdom Of Others

Week 5: St. Thérèse of Lisieux

Saint Thérèse, popularly known as “The Little Flower,” was born in 1873 to devout Catholic parents. Her mother died when Thérèse was 4 years old, and when she was 9, her older sister Pauline—who had acted as a “second mother” to Thérèse—left to join the cloistered Carmelite community of Lisieux, Normandy. Devastated by both losses, Thérèse grew up a sickly and neurotic child before experiencing a spiritual “complete conversion” at aged 13. Two years later, she became a nun and joined the same cloistered community as Pauline. For the next 9 years, Thérèse sought to lead a hidden life of prayer, service, and acts of charity. She died at the age of 24 from tuberculosis.

Below are excerpts from writings by Saint Thérèse. After reading the excerpts, reflect on the following questions:

- In what ways do you identify with the author?
- How does this approach to experiencing God seem interesting or helpful to you?
- How might you apply this to your own everyday life?

Excerpts

I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy. I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would no longer be enamelled with lovely hues. And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord's living garden.

God would never inspire me with desires which cannot be realized; so in spite of my littleness, I can hope to be a saint.

Jesus does not demand great deeds. All He wants is self-surrender and gratitude. That is all Jesus asks from us. He needs nothing from us except our love.

Without love, deeds, even the most brilliant, count as nothing.

Miss no single opportunity of making some small sacrifice, here by a smiling look, there by a kindly word; always doing the smallest right and doing it all for love.

I applied myself above all to practice quite hidden little acts of virtue; thus I liked to fold the mantles forgotten by the Sisters, and sought a thousand opportunities of rendering them service.

I feel that when I am charitable it is Jesus alone who acts in me; the more I am united to Him the more do I love all my Sisters. If, when I desire to increase this love in my heart, the demon tries to set before my eyes the faults of one or other of the Sisters, I hasten to call to mind her virtues, her good desires; I say to myself that if I had seen her fall once, she may well have gained many victories which she conceals through humility; and that even what appears to me a fault may in truth be an act of virtue by reason of the intention.

True Charity consists in bearing with all the defects of our neighbor, in not being surprised at his failings, and in being edified by his least virtues; Charity must not remain shut up in the depths of the heart, for no man lights a candle and puts it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. (Cf. Matthew 5:15). It seems to me that this candle represents the Charity which ought to enlighten and make joyful, not only those who are dearest to me, but all who are in the house.

There is no artist who does not like his work praised, and the Divine Artist of souls is pleased when we do not stop at the exterior, but penetrating even to the inmost sanctuary which He has chosen for His dwelling, we admire its beauty.

I ought to seek the company of those Sisters who according to nature please me least. I ought to fulfill in their regard the office of the Good Samaritan. A word, a kindly smile, will often suffice to gladden a wounded and sorrowful heart.

Being charitable has not always been so pleasant for me, and to prove it I am going to tell you a few of my struggles. And they are not the only ones. At meditation I was for a long time always near a sister who never stopped fidgeting, with either her rosary or something else. Perhaps I was the only one who heard her, as my ears are very sharp, but I could not tell you how it irritated me. What I wanted to do was to turn and stare at her until she stopped her noise, but deep down I knew it was better to endure it patiently—first, for the love of God and, secondly, so as not to upset her. So I made no fuss, though sometimes I was soaked with sweat under the strain and my prayer was nothing but the prayer of suffering. At last I tried to find some way of enduring this suffering calmly and even joyfully. So I did my best to enjoy this unpleasant little noise. Instead of trying not to hear it—which was impossible—I strove to listen to it carefully as if it were a first-class concert, and my meditation, which was not the prayer of quiet, was spent in offering this concert to Jesus.

Another time I was in the washhouse near a sister who constantly splashed me with dirty water as she washed the handkerchiefs. My first impulse was to draw back and wipe my face so as to show her I would like her to work with less splashing. Then I at once thought how foolish I was to refuse the precious gifts offered me so generously and I was very careful not to show my annoyance. In fact, I made such efforts to want to be showered with dirty water that after half an hour I had genuinely taken a fancy to this novel kind of aspersion, and I decided to turn up as often as I could to that lucky spot where so much spiritual wealth was freely handed out.

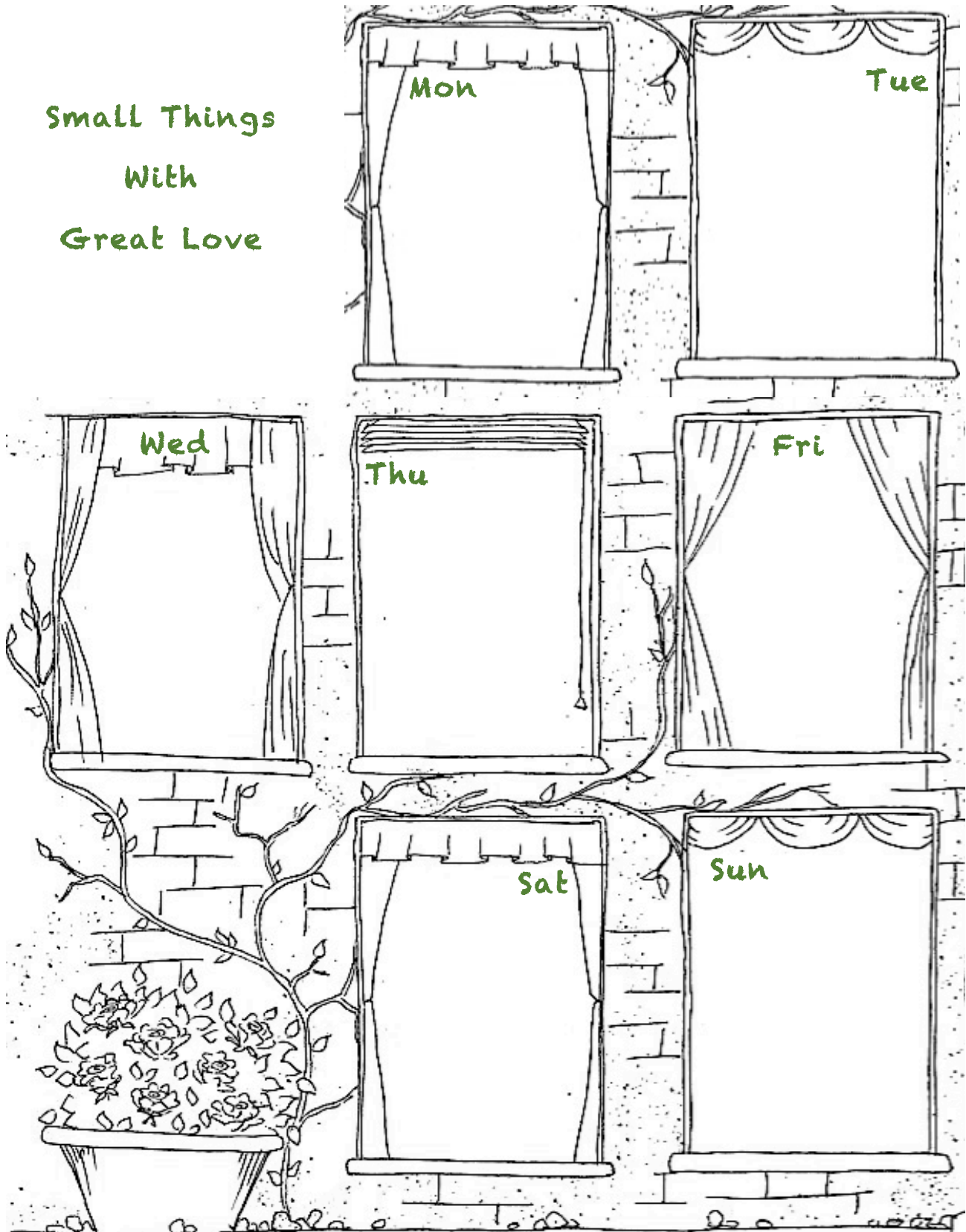
You see that I am a very little soul who can only offer very little things to God; it often happens that I let slip the chance of making these little sacrifices which give such peace, but I'm not discouraged. I put up with having a bit less peace and try to be more careful next time.

Practice for the week: Doing Small Things with Great Love

For this week's activity focus on doing small things with great love. Take one minute at the beginning of each day to center yourself and set your mindset to one of service for the day ahead. Throughout the day, look for simple opportunities to serve. This might be taking responsibility for a chore at home that you'd normally be happy for someone else to do. It might be helping a coworker, smiling at someone you meet, going out of your way to thank someone, holding the door open or letting someone jump ahead of you in a line. Don't worry about impact or recognition. Just be the one who does the small things. Each evening take a few minutes to reflect back on the day and the opportunities you had. Which ones did you take? Which ones did you miss? What difference did all this make to you and to others? Don't judge yourself, but make some notes on the Week 5 Journal Page about your findings and learning.

Week 5 Journal Page

Small Things
With
Great Love



Winter Discipleship Series 2020

More Than Enough—Learning From The Wisdom Of Others

Week 6: Howard Thurman

Howard Washington Thurman (1899–1981) was a prolific author, theologian, philosopher and civil rights leader. An African-American Baptist minister, Thurman served as dean at Howard University, and later at Boston University. In 1944, he collaborated with a white minister in San Francisco to found the interracial, interdenominational Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples. Thurman's theology of radical nonviolence had a profound influence on the civil rights movement in the United States, and he was a mentor and spiritual advisor to Martin Luther King, Jr., and several of his fellow activists.

Below is an excerpt from Thurman's most famous book, "Jesus and the Disinherited." After reading the excerpt, reflect on the following questions:

- In what ways do you identify with the author?
- How does this approach to experiencing God seem interesting or helpful to you?
- How might you apply this to your own everyday life?

Excerpt

...It was this kind of atmosphere that characterized the life of the Jewish community when Jesus was a youth in Palestine. The urgent question was what must be the attitude toward Rome. Was any attitude possible that would be morally tolerable and at the same time preserve a basic self-esteem— without which life could not possibly have any meaning? The question was not academic. It was the most crucial of questions. In essence, Rome was the enemy; Rome symbolized total frustration; Rome was the great barrier to peace of mind. And Rome was everywhere. No Jewish person of the period could deal with the question of his practical life, his vocation, his place in society, until first he had settled deep within himself this critical issue.

This is the position of the disinherited in every age. What must be the attitude toward the rulers, the controllers of political, social, and economic life? This is the question of the Negro in American life. Until he has faced and settled that question, he cannot inform his environment with reference to his own life, whatever may be his preparation or his pretensions.

In the main, there were two alternatives faced by the Jewish minority of which Jesus was a part. Simply stated, these were to resist or not to resist. But each of these alternatives has within it secondary alternatives.

Under the general plan of nonresistance one may take the position of imitation. The aim of such an attitude is to assimilate the culture and the social behavior-pattern of the dominant group. It is the profound capitulation to the powerful, because it means the yielding of oneself to that which, deep within, one recognizes as being unworthy. It makes for a strategic loss of self-respect. The aim is to reduce all outer or external signs of difference to zero, so that there shall be no ostensible cause for active violence

or opposition. Under some circumstances it may involve a repudiation of one's heritage, one's customs, one's faith. Accurate imitation until the façade of complete assimilation is securely placed and the antagonism of difference dissolved— such is the function of this secondary alternative within the broader alternative of nonresistance. Herod was an excellent example of this solution.

To some extent this was also the attitude of the Sadducees. They represented the “upper” class. From their number came the high priests, and most of the economic security derived from contemporary worship in the temple was their monopoly. They did not represent the masses of the people. Any disturbance of the established order meant upsetting their position. They loved Israel, but they seem to have loved security more. They made their public peace with Rome and went on about the business of living. They were astute enough to see that their own position could be perpetuated if they stood firmly against all revolutionaries and radicals. Such persons would only stir the people to resist the inevitable, and in the end everything would be lost. Their tragedy was in the fact that they idealized the position of the Roman in the world and suffered the moral fate of the Romans by becoming like them. They saw only two roads open before them— become like the Romans or be destroyed by the Romans. They chose the former.

The other alternative in the nonresistance pattern is to reduce contact with the enemy to a minimum. It is the attitude of cultural isolation in the midst of a rejected culture. Cunning the mood may be—one of bitterness and hatred, but also one of deep, calculating fear. To take up active resistance would be foolhardy, for a thousand reasons. The only way out is to keep one's resentment under rigid control and censorship.

The issue raised by this attitude is always present. The opposition to those who work for social change does not come only from those who are the guarantors of the status quo. Again and again it has been demonstrated that the lines are held by those whose hold on security is sure only as long as the status quo remains intact. The reasons for this are not far to seek. If a man is convinced that he is safe only as long as he uses his power to give others a sense of insecurity, then the measure of their security is in his hands. If security or insecurity is at the mercy of a single individual or group, then control of behavior becomes routine. All imperialism functions in this way. Subject peoples are held under control by this device.

One of the most striking scenes in the movie Ben Hur was that in which a Roman legion marches by while hundreds of people stand silently on the roadside. As the last soldier passes, a very dignified, self-possessed Jewish gentleman, with folded arms and eyes smoldering with the utmost contempt, without the slightest shift of his facial muscles spits at the heel of the receding legionary— a consummate touch. Such— in part, at least— was the attitude of the Pharisee. No active resistance against Rome— only a terrible contempt. Obviously such an attitude is a powder keg. One nameless incident may cause to burst into flame the whole gamut of smoldering passion, leaving nothing in its wake but charred corpses, mute reminders of the tragedy of life. Jesus saw this and understood it clearly.

The other major alternative is resistance. It may be argued that even nonresistance is a form of resistance, for it may be regarded as an appositive dimension of resistance. Resistance may be overt action, or it may be merely mental and moral attitudes. For the purposes of our discussion resistance is defined as the physical, overt expression of an inner attitude. Resistance in this sense finds its most dramatic manifestation in force of arms.

Armed resistance is apt to be a tragic last resort in the life of the disinherited. Armed resistance has an appeal because it provides a form of expression, of activity, that releases tension and frees the oppressed from a disintegrating sense of complete impotency and helplessness. “Why can't we do something? Something must be done!” is the recurring cry. By “something” is meant action, direct action, as over against words, subtleties, threats, and innuendoes. It is better to die fighting for freedom than to rot away in one's chains, the argument runs.

*Before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave,
And go home to my God
And be free!*

The longer the mood is contemplated, the more insistent the appeal. It is a form of fanaticism, to be sure, but that may not be a vote against it. In all action there is operative a fringe of irrationality. Once the mood is thoroughly established, any council of caution is interpreted as either compromise or cowardice. The fact that the ruler has available to him the power of the state and complete access to all arms is scarcely considered. Out of the depths of the heart there swells a great and awful assurance that because the cause is just, it cannot fail. Any failure is regarded as temporary and, to the devoted, as a testing of character.

This was the attitude of the Zealots of Jesus' day. There was added appeal in their position because it called forth from the enemy organized determination and power. It is never to be forgotten that one of the ways by which men measure their own significance is to be found in the amount of power and energy other men must use in order to crush them or hold them back. This is at least one explanation of the fact that even a weak and apparently inconsequential movement becomes formidable under the pressure of great persecution. The persecution becomes a vote of confidence, which becomes, in turn, a source of inspiration, power, and validation. The Zealots knew this. Jesus knew this. It is a matter of more than passing significance that he had a Zealot among his little band of followers, indeed among the twelve chosen ones.

In the face of these alternatives Jesus came forth with still another. On this point Simkhovitch makes a profound contribution to the understanding of the psychology of Jesus. He reminds us that Jesus expressed his alternative in a "brief formula— The Kingdom of Heaven is in us." He states further:

Jesus had to resent deeply the loss of Jewish national independence and the aggression of Rome. . . . Natural humiliation was hurting and burning. The balm for that burning humiliation was humility. For humility cannot be humiliated. . . . Thus he asked his people to learn from him, "For I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

It was but natural that such a position would be deeply resented by many of his fellows, who were suffering even as he was. To them it was a complete betrayal to the enemy. It was to them a counsel of acquiescence, if not of despair, full to overflowing with a kind of groveling and stark cowardice. Besides, it seemed like self-deception, like whistling in the dark. All of this would have been quite true if Jesus had stopped there. He did not. He recognized with authentic realism that anyone who permits another to determine the quality of his inner life gives into the hands of the other the keys to his destiny. If a man knows precisely what he can do to you or what epithet he can hurl against you in order to make you lose your temper, your equilibrium, then he can always keep you under subjection. It is a man's reaction to things that determines their ability to exercise power over him. It seems clear that Jesus understood the anatomy of the relationship between his people and the Romans, and he interpreted that relationship against the background of the profoundest ethical insight of his own religious faith as he had found it in the heart of the prophets of Israel.

The solution which Jesus found for himself and for Israel, as they faced the hostility of the Greco-Roman world, becomes the word and the work of redemption for all the cast-down people in every generation and in every age. I mean this quite literally. I do not ignore the theological and metaphysical interpretation of the Christian doctrine of salvation. But the underprivileged everywhere have long since abandoned any hope that this type of salvation deals with the crucial issues by which their days are turned into despair without consolation. The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher

and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. That it became, through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and the dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing that it was thus in the mind and life of Jesus. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” Wherever his spirit appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them.

... Living in a climate of deep insecurity, Jesus, faced with so narrow a margin of civil guarantees, had to find some other basis upon which to establish a sense of well-being. He knew that the goals of religion as he understood them could never be worked out within the then-established order. Deep from within that order he projected a dream, the logic of which would give to all the needful security. There would be room for all, and no man would be a threat to his brother. “The kingdom of God is within.” “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.”

The basic principles of his way of life cut straight through to the despair of his fellows and found it groundless. By inference he says, “You must abandon your fear of each other and fear only God. You must not indulge in any deception and dishonesty, even to save your lives. Your words must be Yea—Nay; anything else is evil. Hatred is destructive to hated and hater alike. Love your enemy, that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven.”

Practice for the week: The Welcoming Prayer

Howard Thurman’s spirituality deeply informed his activism. He realized that the way of non-violent resistance to evil in society was only possible through the nurturing of a non-violent inner life. For Thurman, justice in the way of Jesus is found at the energized interface where contemplation and action meet. From here, anger, pain and sorrow can all be expressed in full and healthy ways that bring about positive change.

In this week’s activity we will focus on our own violent responses in everyday life. At a personal level in our families, at work, and in our relationships in general we are often hurt or offended and emotions are stirred up. Our sense of self-worth, security or control feels threatened, and we experience an inner chaos out of which we can react and respond in less than helpful ways. This means that we in turn add more chaos to the situations and relationships around us. Through a contemplative approach, we can address our inner chaos to bring calm and simplicity, out of which we can then respond with healthy energy to address the real issues. The Welcoming Prayer is a practice that helps us do this, and the method is described below. Set aside some time to practice this each day this week. The point is not to suppress emotions or to judge them but to welcome them as indicators of something chaotic going on inside. They help us get to the root of what is going on inwardly so we can respond with more positive energy outwardly.

As you practice in the safety of solitude, you may find you nurture a skill (that’s what practice does!) to respond more simply and healthily in more vulnerable moments of conflict. At the end of each day take a moment to reflect back on how you dealt with the inevitable vulnerable moments we all experience. Make some notes of your reflections on the Week 6 Journal Page.

Welcoming Prayer

Welcoming prayer is a prayer practice that helps us let go of unhealthy responses to certain emotions we are experiencing while helping us to embrace more of God's love.

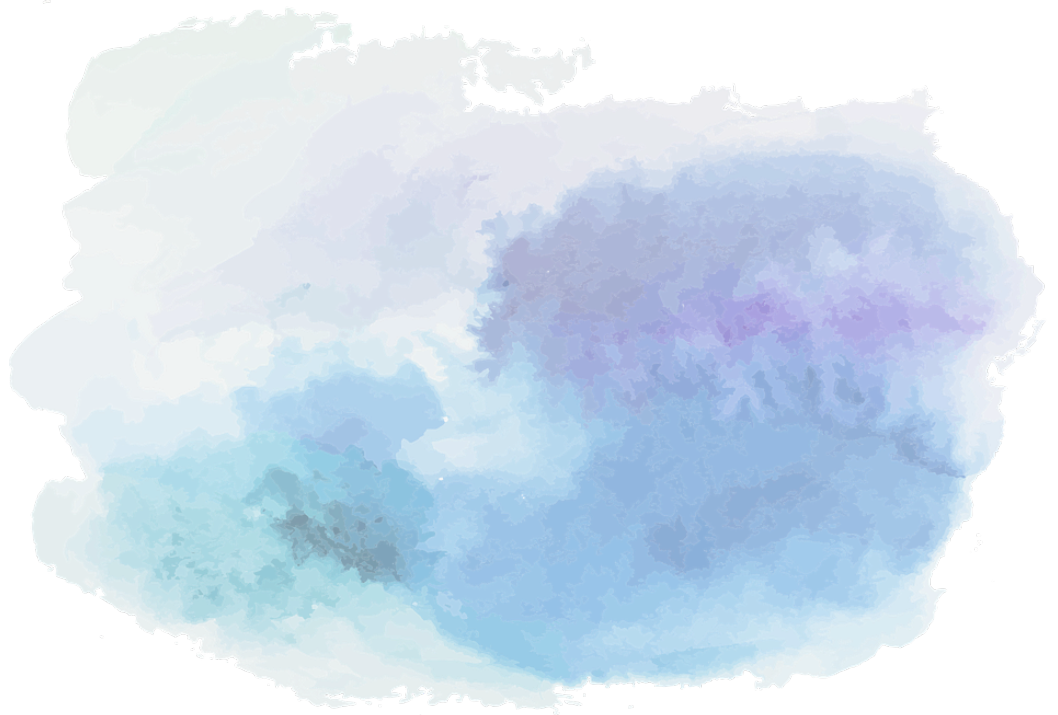
Here is a short summary of a way you can practice the Welcoming Prayer in the moment strong feelings arise, whether afflictive emotions, negative attitudes or powerful urges you would rather not have. This practice can help with physical pain and discomfort too.

- **Notice, focus and sink in** to your emotion, urge or attitude— Go *toward it* rather than suppress or struggle with it. Don't run away from it or fight it or react to it instinctively or habitually. Stay with this step of noticing and sinking in until you really experience a connection to the feeling, not just in your emotional being but even getting in touch with it on a physical level—do not bypass or rush through this part. It may help you get more deeply in touch with it to take time to feel and identify specifically where in your body you are carrying it or most feel it. Sometimes it helps to sink in to the feeling by placing your hand on the place in the body where you are feeling it. (Note well that what we are noticing and welcoming the thing that triggered our strong feelings, but the *feelings themselves*.)
- **Welcome** — Affirm who you are as a child beloved of God and where you are in your journey by treating this identified feeling/urge etc. not as an enemy but as a friend who can teach you something and help set you free. Name in your mind the feeling/attitude/urge and then say, "Welcome [fear/anger/worry/envy/lust/ hatred/ sorrow/greed,]." Don't just say this and move on. Repeat it and sit with the feeling until you experience a genuine sense that you acknowledge it as where you are at this moment, and that you are not fighting against it. Don't judge the feeling as "bad" or "sinful", which may contribute to simply stuffing it back down inside.
- **Let Go.** When you have allowed yourself to name and accept the feeling, let it go by saying, "God, I give you my [fear/anger/worry/envy/lust/grief/greed, etc.]" and try to feel yourself letting go. Then make the following statements about surrendering your deepest needs to God, no matter what the specific issue is, recognizing the deep seated needs that are the source of many of our feelings and urges, that only God can truly satisfy:
 - "I let go of my desire for safety and security in this situation."
 - "I let go of my desire for esteem and affection in this situation."
 - "I let go of my desire for power and control in this situation."

Stay in the letting go, or turn back to the focus or welcome stages as appropriate. When your welcoming time is complete thank God for God's presence and love with you, empowering you and setting you free.

Week 6 Journal Page

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Winter Discipleship Series 2020

More Than Enough—Learning From The Wisdom Of Others

Week 7: Eugene Peterson

Eugene Hoiland Peterson (1932–2018) was a minister, theologian, scholar and author, perhaps best known for his paraphrased translation of the Bible, *The Message*. He was a prolific author, writing over 30 books, as well as countless articles and poems. Despite international success, he continued to serve as founding pastor of Christ Our King Presbyterian Church in Bel Air, Maryland, for 29 years before his retirement in 1991. Many of his books were addressed to pastors, and drew on this first-hand experience of faithful service to a local congregation.

Below are excerpts from Eugene Peterson’s books and interviews. After reading the excerpts, reflect on the following questions:

- In what ways do you identify with the author?
- How does this approach to experiencing God seem interesting or helpful to you?
- How might you apply this to your own everyday life?

Excerpts

1. From “A Long Obedience in the Same Direction”

One aspect of the world [an atmosphere, a mood in opposition to the kingdom] that I have been able to identify as harmful to Christians is the assumption that anything worthwhile can be acquired at once. We assume that if something can be done at all, it can be done quickly and efficiently. Our attention spans have been conditioned by thirty-second commercials. Our sense of reality has been flattened by thirty-page abridgments.

It is not difficult in such a world to get a person interested in the message of the gospel; it is terribly difficult to sustain the interest. Millions of people in our culture make decisions for Christ, but there is a dreadful attrition rate. Many claim to have been born again, but the evidence for mature Christian discipleship is slim. In our kind of culture anything, even news about God, can be sold if it is packaged freshly; but when it loses its novelty, it goes on the garbage heap. There is a great market for religious experience in our world; there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.

Religion in our time has been captured by the tourist mindset. Religion is understood as a visit to an attractive site to be made when we have adequate leisure. For some it is a weekly jaunt to church; for others, occasional visits to special services. Some, with a bent for religious entertainment and sacred diversion, plan their lives around special events like retreats, rallies and conferences. We go to see a new personality, to hear a new truth, to get a new experience and so somehow expand our otherwise humdrum lives... The Christian life cannot mature under such conditions.

Frederich Nietzsche, who saw this area of spiritual truth at least with great clarity, wrote, “The essential thing ‘in heaven and earth’ is...that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; there thereby

results, and has always results in the long run, something which has made life worth living.” It is this “long obedience in the same direction” which the mood of the world does so much to discourage.

For recognizing and resisting the stream of the world’s ways there are two biblical designations for people of faith that are extremely useful: *disciple* and *pilgrim*. *Disciple* says we are people who spend our lives apprenticed to our master, Jesus Christ. We are in a growing-learning relationship, always. A disciple is a learner, but not in the academic setting of a schoolroom, rather at the work site of a craftsman. We do not acquire information about God but skills in faith.

Pilgrim tells us we are people who spend our lives going someplace, going to God, and whose path for getting there is the way, Jesus Christ. We realize that ‘this is world is not my home’ and set out for the “Father’s house.” Abraham, who “went out,” is our archetype. Jesus, answering Thomas’ question “Master, we have no idea where you’re going. How do you expect us to know the road?” gives us directions: “I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me” (John 14:5-6). The letter to the Hebrews defines our program: “Do you see what this means—all those pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in” (Hebrews 12:1-2).

...perseverance is not resignation, putting up with things the way they are, staying in the same old rut year after year, or being a doormat for people to wipe their feet on. Endurance is not a desperate hanging on but a traveling from strength to strength.

...The central reality for Christians is the personal, unalterable, persevering commitment God makes to us. Perseverance is not the result of our determination, it is the result of God’s faithfulness. We survive in the way of faith not because we have extraordinary stamina but because God is righteous, because God sticks with us. Christian discipleship is a process of paying more and more attention to God’s righteousness and less and less attention to our own; finding the meaning of our lives not by probing our moods and motives and morals but by believing in God’s will and purposes; making a map of the faithfulness of God, not charting the rise and fall of our enthusiasms. It is out of such a reality that we acquire perseverance.

2. From Interviews

When I was a pastor of a congregation, people would leave and say, “How do I pick a church?” Go to the nearest smallest church and commit yourself to being there for 6 months. If it doesn’t work out, find somewhere else. But don’t look for programs, don’t look for entertainment, and don’t look for a great preacher. A Christian congregation is not a glamorous place, not a romantic place. That’s what I always told people. If people were leaving my congregation to go to another place of work, I’d say, “The smallest church, the closest church, and *stay there* for 6 months.” Sometimes it doesn’t work. Some pastors are just incompetent. And some are flat out bad. So I don’t think that’s the answer to everything, but it’s a better place to start than going to the one with all the programs, the glitz, all that stuff.

Pastors enter congregations vocationally in order to embrace the totality of human life in Jesus’ name. We are convinced there is no detail, however unpromising, in people’s lives in which Christ may not work his will. Pastors agree to stay with the people in their communities week in and week out, year in and year out, to proclaim and guide, encourage and instruct as God work his purposes (gloriously, it will eventually turn out) in the meandering and disturbingly inconstant lives of our congregations.

This necessarily means taking seriously, and in faith, the dull routines, the empty boredom, and the unattractive responsibilities that make up much of most people’s lives. It means witnessing to the transcendent in the fog and rain. It means living hopefully among people who from time to time get

flickering glimpses of the Glory but then live through stretches, sometimes long ones, of unaccountable grayness. Most pastor work takes place in obscurity: deciphering grace in the shadows, searching out meaning in a difficult text, blowing on the embers of a hard-used life. This is hard work and not conspicuously glamorous.

Practice for the week: Deepening Commitment

If we are healthy and active, we will often become hungry and thirsty, and we will meet these cravings with food and drink, meal after meal, day after day. So, too, experiencing satisfaction through our relationship with God—which brings health and wholeness to all other aspects of our life—requires repeated practice. Discipleship is not an instantaneous transformation, but the journey of a lifetime. Even Friedrich Nietzsche, in his book *Beyond Good and Evil*, noted the importance of sustained commitment:

The essential thing "in heaven and earth" is... that there should be long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living.

Spend some time this week prayerfully thinking about to what and whom you are committed:

- In what ways do you both feel and live out your commitment to following Jesus? Are there ways in which you can strengthen this devotion?
- If any of the practices in this series have been helpful to you, how can you remember to practice them over the long-term?
- What relationships mean the most to you, and how can you deepen them? Is there anyone in your life to whom you need to show an increased level of commitment? What might that look like?
- What work—whether paid or voluntary—do you care about passionately, and how can you give more of your time to what feels meaningful to you?

Make notes in the Week 7 Journal Page, and ask God to help you deepen your commitment to the things that matter most in life.

Week 7 Journal Page



Winter Discipleship Series 2020
More Than Enough

Annex: Recommended Reading

"The Practice of the Presence of God in Modern English" by Brother Lawrence, translated by Marshall Davis, 2013

"The Little Way of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Into the Arms of Love" by John Nelson, 1998

"Jesus and the Disinherited" by Howard Thurman, 1949

"For the Inward Journey: The Writings of Howard Thurman" selected by Anne Spencer Thurman, 1984

"A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society" by Eugene H. Peterson, 1980