

Renewal!

Discussion Questions

April 12, Rest and Renewal



1. What impacted you most during the service this past Sunday? How would you describe what you experienced? In what ways did you experience encouragement and in what ways discomfort?
2. In our Easter service we considered the unusual ways in which the resurrection narrative is recorded in the Christian Scriptures. Jesus' followers are left somewhat afraid and confused. Jesus doesn't seem to bring the triumphal conclusion to his work that they were all expecting but talks about a new beginning rather than a climactic end. Why do you think Jesus does this? Why do you think the stories are passed on to us this way? What are we being invited into and what is your response?
3. Read Acts 1:3-5. Why do you think Jesus asks his followers to wait? What could be the benefit of such a pause in such a moment? How do you think his followers felt about what Jesus says?
4. On Sunday, we talked about rest – the need for rest, the gift of rest, the benefit of rest. How did this make you feel personally? Why do you think our culture is so resistant to rest? What might be keeping you from rest?
5. What stood out most to you in the panel discussion today? What aspects challenged you personally? How do you plan to participate in our "Inside Out" day of service next Sunday? Visit crcc.org/announcements for details.
6. What are some areas of our church community in which you would like to see renewal? How do you need to experience renewal personally? How might rest help in both scenarios?
7. Take a moment to practice this week's prayer together (see below) and then share your experience of it with each other.

Prayer Practice for the week: A Practice of Being

This is a practice of simply "being". There is no need to stress or strain, no need to perform or prove ourselves. Because God is Love, we can relax and just "be." Center yourself by sitting comfortably in silence with your back straight, feet planted on the ground, arms relaxed, and hands supported in your lap. Close your eyes and relax your shoulders. To begin, focus on your breathing allowing tension to flow away from your body, and your spirit to be at peace. We will slowly and consciously walk through 4 stages in this exercise. Just relax and go with the flow.

Stage 1: Acceptance

Take a moment to consciously accept that God is present to you right now – present in all your reality. You can't make this any more real or any less real - it's all God. So just relax and accept it. God just "is" - and God is love. Let's take a minute to accept this.

Pause for 1 minute.

Stage 2: Letting go

Let go of any evaluative thoughts. These could be thoughts like "Is God really here?" or "Would God really want to be with someone like me?" or "Why on earth am I doing this?" Don't analyze yourself or God. Just choose to ignore evaluative thoughts and let them go. Let's take a minute to do this.

Pause for 1 minute

Stage 3: Resonate

Consciously choose to absorb God without reservation. Ease your way into this, relax, be aware of your breathing and with each outbreath sink deeper and deeper into God's love. Let's do this for a minute.

Pause for 1 minute.

Now begin to reflect that love back to God. Imagine that you are in a constant cycle of receiving God's love and reflecting it back. As you breathe in – receive God's love. As you breathe out - pour out your love to God. Consciously feel that you are part of this same vibration with God and let it resonate and grow with every breath. Let's take a minute to do this.

Pause for 1 minute.

Stage 4: Just Be

Remain in this posture of giving and receiving love. Let go of any worries about who, what or how you are. Just be conscious that you are... just "be." Let's take a few moments to just "be."

Pause for 2 minutes.

Now return to consciousness of your breathing. Open your eyes and be aware of your surroundings - and give thanks that God is in you, and you are in God in all of this reality you experience.

(In-)Active Alternative Practice: A Practice of Rest

Set aside time this week to rest by taking a nap. Allow yourself to stop without guilt or the pressure to be productive. Receive this rest as a gift, trusting that you are held and loved even when you are not doing anything at all.

