

Me Monday

*"...for it is my eager hope and expectation that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."
Philippians 1:20*

Main idea: the reference point of all spiritual experience is the personhood of the individual. Even in a community, the reference point to which one experiences God is themselves. Seems basic, but we lose something if we skip over this step. Who I perceive myself to be, my gender, my ethnicity, the color of my skin, my family of origin all frame my spiritual experiences and how I perceive the character of God. Take a moment to read through the following spiritual inventory and jot down a few thoughts. If you are going through 7RI with a friend, make time to connect and share your answers.

1. How does your family of origin talk about God? Were there any childhood practices or rituals?
2. Your gender, ethnicity, and race are all sacred gifts from your Creator. How has gender, race, ethnicity played a role in how you experience God?
3. Name a time you felt closest to God, if ever. Name a time when God felt more distant. If you have a "testimony" go ahead and share it.

Bonus: Do something today that brings restoration to your body. Maybe it's a good workout, an afternoon coffee, romantic time with your spouse, good wine, or an extra helping of dessert. We are not disembodied spirits floating around. Your body was designed to experience God through God's creation--enjoy!

Tent of Meeting Tuesday

"Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend." Exodus 33:10-11

Funny name, but Tent of Meeting is a reference to the place God would meet Moses as they left slavery in Egypt and journeyed to the land of God's promises. In this tent God revealed to Moses his glory. God's glory was so intense that Moses' face radiated with light even after he left the tent.

I don't know where life has taken you, but today, you may feel like you are on a pilgrimage. There are metaphoric or even literal chains that you have left behind as you seek the good God has promised to you. Maybe you are a leader of a team, group, family, or business and you need wisdom, strength, and clarity of vision. Maybe you just need help, comfort, liberation, or peace. God wants to reveal his glory to you.

Take a moment of reflection and think about if you could ask God to do anything for you and you knew He would answer, what would you ask Him? If you are going through 7RI with a friend, pray as you are able. Your prayer might be a simple petition. Your prayer might be an elaborate story. Your prayer might be an outburst of frustration. Don't judge yourself too

harshly. God desires for you to present your authentic self. Then ask for God to reveal his glory. If you are at a loss for words, you can always pray the prayer that Jesus taught his followers: Our Father in Heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on Earth as in Heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Worship Wednesday

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." John 4:24

For as long as the spiritual disciplines of Christianity have been practiced, music has played a significant role. Music, like most artforms, speaks to us on a different plane and doesn't always follow the rules of logic and rationality. Music has the ability to access our spirit and draw out of it feelings and a sense of reality that transcends what we can touch, feel and see. For today's spiritual practice I invite you to SING. Songs become the prayer language of people who worship God. An ancient proverb says, "The one who sings, prays twice." Once in the physical utterances of your lungs, tongue, teeth, and lips, and once again in your spirit as you offer up praise to God.

But why should we worship God, or anything at all for that matter?

Humans are worshipful beings. It is truly impossible to not worship. We will either give worship to our Creator, or we will give worship to creating things like wealth, sex, and power. There's nothing wrong with wealth, sex, or power--they are all gifts given to us by God to steward. But whatever it is we choose to worship will undoubtedly end up conforming us into its' image. The act of worshiping forms your spirit. Your spirit is too high and too lofty for created things. Spirit finds its' peace in the presence of the one who is THE Spirit. Here are two songs for you to sing along to. After listening to one or both, journal a brief reflection on anything that spoke to your heart.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sM5hfQuJAio>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpMEDnjtAy8>

Theology Thursday

"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people." Luke 2:10

"Theology" might be a strange word that might come with certain baggage for some people. But in its' simplest meaning, theology is the study of God. When you study the world around you and connect it to the character of God, that could be theology. When a conversation with a friend brings a healing word in a hard season of life, that could be an experience of theology. Studying ancient scripture is also theology. Today I invite you to consider how the ancient story of Jesus' resurrection might integrate into your modern life. Consider how you might integrate the theology of resurrection into areas of life that you need brought back to life.

Friendship Friday

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!”
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10*

Community is a blessing from God. Today’s spiritual practice is to enjoy the friendship you have with another person. If you are able to get outdoors or do an activity in the same physical space, make time for that. If you are still sheltering in place catch up on a phone/zoom call. We aren’t meant to walk through this life alone. This may or may not feel like a spiritual discipline, but in fact, friends turn out to be one of the most powerful influences in your life and your spirit.

Service Saturday

“And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’” Matthew 25:40

Our spiritual health can be measured vertically (with God) and horizontally (with our neighbors). The stronger your spiritual bond with God is, the better you will treat your neighbor. Therefore, how you treat your neighbor is an indicator light on how strong your connection with God is. The way of Jesus goes one step further. He shows us that our “neighbor” is not just the people among whom we live peaceably. Our earthly neighborhood extends to those who occupy a lower economic status, those who live differently than we do, and even those we’d consider our enemies. The way Jesus’ followers indiscriminately served everybody was scandalous in the early beginnings of Christianity. The powers that be relied on demonstrations of force to impose their rule. The authority given by Jesus is only accessed through serving, even if it means serving people considered by society as “the least.”

Faith isn’t meant to stay boxed up in your heart or in your head. It is meant to make contact with the world and make a difference. Today, can you gather some money together and give it away to a charity? Or can you assemble care packages and hand them out to people in need? Or can you spend time serving at a shelter or donating to a food bank? It is time to let the rubber hit the road and allow your spirit to be strengthened by serving others.