

DAILY GUIDES

JULY 2024 BY JOSH REEVES

Solitude is not a private therapeutic place. Rather, it is the place of conversion, the place where the old self dies and the new self is born.

— HENRI NOUWEN

Artwork by Anna Artist



REV. JOSH REEVES

The theme for this month's Daily Guides is "Practice Makes Imperfect." This suits my personality. Not only am I one of the most successful screw-ups I know, but I also have learned that behind my foibles, there is grace. Behind my mistakes, there is divine jest. That's the thing about spiritual practice. Until you release the need to be perfect, it isn't spiritual practice. That's the thing about life, too. Until you release the need to be perfect, it isn't really being alive.

Rev. Josh Reeves is Nancy June and Gavin's dad. He also is the co-lead minister at Mile Hi Church. His brother took him to the Oasis Teen group in Huntington Beach when he was 13 years old in 1994. Due to the love of Mary Feldman and countless other female spiritual mentors through his life (like Peggy Price and Linda McNamar), he became a practitioner in 1999 and a minister in 2006. Josh served in a position he loved as senior minister at the Seal Beach Center for Spiritual Living for seven years. Then Roger Teel called, and today he serves in the biggest job of his life thus far at Mile Hi Church in Lakewood, Colorado.

A Changeless Reality

There is a theory that states that if ever anyone discovers exactly what the Universe is for and why it is here, it will instantly disappear and be replaced by something even more bizarre and inexplicable. There is another theory that states that this has already happened.

— Douglas Adams

The Eternal Principle is forever hidden.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 75

I am a being forever in flux, held by a changeless reality. That's so much of what this spiritual living stuff is all about. I am forever in flux.

I am not quite the same person I was 10 years ago. My children grow up around me. At times, it's like one of those soap operas when a change of actor or actress would occur. A narrator comes on and says, "The part of so and so will now be played by..." That's how fast they change.

I'm nostalgic in this flux, because so much is now past. But I also am lost. I can't seem to locate myself in this flux.

However, always in my life, I have been able to find myself in the changeless — a sense of timelessness on a morning walk, a sense of connection with Spirit while writing down my thoughts, a song that anoints my heart.

I am a being forever in flux, held by a changeless reality.

Now, I'm not saying there isn't a lot of wonderful in the flux, but thank God for the Changeless. That's what spiritual living is. It is letting who we are become not just informed by the flux but also by the Changeless. It's allowing our living to be informed by the Changeless.

Zen Center founder Shunryu Suzuki said, "Nothing you see or hear is perfect. But right there is perfect reality."

AFFIRMATION

I am forever in flux, held by a changeless reality.

That Which Is Always Best

Whatever may be the tensions and the stresses of a particular day, there is always lurking close at hand the trailing beauty of forgotten joy or unremembered peace.

— Howard Thurman

There is always a silent communion going on between the individual soul and the invisible Presence.

— Ernest Holmes, "Richer Living," page 197

Emerson said, "That is always best which returns me to myself." What returns you to yourself? Do it again and again. Meditating. Reading. Walking. Praying. Listening to music that doesn't just attach you to your past but informs your present.

There is so much we do that pulls us outward toward tasks, the perceived needs of others and our perceived ideas of the eyes of invisible beings that may see us as worthy or competent or special. Let that all go.

"That is always best which returns me to myself." But what turns you inward? What brings a resonance so your inner world and your exterior world connect and you create harmony?

The tales of Br'er Rabbit call it our "laughing place." Maya Angelou speaks to this place as that which feels like home, a place where you can belly laugh and let your hair down. Some of us we can locate that place geographically. Others find that place when engaged in an activity. And for some of us, it is simply the result of giving ourselves permission to be ourselves.

The spiritual life truly encompasses our ability to go home every day, even though our life may find us in strange or deserted places. As we return to ourselves, we can give the heart of ourselves to our daily activities. The best of our spirit informs our choices, excites our connections and grounds us even in the midst of a busy sea of traffic, to-do lists and mutterings.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I return to myself, over and over again.

Even When You're Right

Nobody stands taller than those willing to stand corrected.

— William Safire

We shall have to know that the truth we announce is superior to the condition that it is to change.

— Ernest Holmes, "It's Up to You," page 46

Have you ever been in an argument where you were convinced you were right only to wind up being wrong? This happens to me with my spouse. I know I'm right about the finances or about something we agreed to do that didn't happen. Yet I'm so attached to being right that I tend to feed the illusion that I know best. In that smug arrogance, I lose the tools that help me live in the mystery of a life filled with much more that is unknown than that is known — listening, openness, honesty, understanding and, of course, love.

I didn't listen to my partner. I judged her position and shouldn't be surprised that she interpreted that as judging her. I chose being right over being love.

I learned in my marriage that "winning" the argument is never about being right. It's about who gets back to love first. Being right is isolating; being love is connecting. Being right is exhausting; being love is energizing. It's not that issues should be ignored or problems left unsolved, it is just so much easier to solve these when love is at the start of the solution.

Trust me, when it comes to this mystery of life we live in, filled with fellow travelers who are as lost and sometimes more gleefully lost than we are, being right is overrated. Be love. Be open. Seek understanding. Seek listening.

Maybe you'll get something better than being right. Maybe you'll get what you really want.

AFFIRMATION

I choose to be love more than I choose to be right.
I am listening. I am compassionate. I am caring.

The Grand Old Constellations

The essence of America, what really unites us, is not nationality or ethnicity or religion. It is an idea. And what an idea it is: that you can come from humble circumstances and you can do great things, that it does not matter where you came from — it matters where you are going.

— Condoleezza Rice

The all-knowing mind of God contains the answer to every problem that confronts this country.

— Ernest Holmes, "My Prayer for My Country"

Asked at the height of the Civil War if he was not losing his faith in the Union, President Abraham Lincoln replied, "When I was a young man in Illinois, I boarded for a time with a deacon of the Presbyterian church. One night I was roused from my sleep by a rap at the door, and I heard the deacon's voice exclaiming, 'Arise, Abraham! the day of judgment has come!' I sprang from my bed and rushed to the window, and saw the stars falling in great showers; but looking back of them in the heavens I saw the grand old constellations, with which I was so well acquainted, fixed and true in their places. Gentlemen, the world did not come to an end then, nor will the Union now."

This is our work as spiritual practitioners, to look past the fireworks of pessimism and distrust, of blame and speculation, of discord and drama, and to see those "grand old constellations." This doesn't mean we don't acknowledge where justice, liberty and the pursuit of happiness may not be being realized for all. It means that we do so always with those grand old constellations in mind. Like John F. Kennedy, we can see ourselves as idealists without any illusions. Patriotism isn't blind allegiance, but instead means holding our country accountable to what it can be.

Let's apply a consciousness of wholeness to our country this day. Let's move away from the fringes that sow distrust and get back to center. Let's hold a vision of America that doesn't demand perfection of its leaders, but instead seeks in them honesty, strength and passion.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I hold myself and my country
in a consciousness of wholeness.

The Dark Night

In deepest solitude / I found the narrow way; / a secret giving such release / that I was stunned and stammering / rising above all knowing.

— St. John of the Cross

The whole aim of the study of Science of Mind is to realize and consciously penetrate the upper atmosphere of our thought and bring down, as it were, into lower mind, greater visions of reality.

— Ernest Holmes, "Can We Talk to God?," page 24

St. John of the Cross (Juan De La Cruz) famously spoke of the dark night of the soul. One interpretation is that the dark night of the soul is a time of personal difficulty and transformation.

Although I've never been grateful while experiencing tough times of change, I have found grace in affirming that I am somehow, through them, being initiated into a greater way of being. This is not to imply that challenges are God ordained or that we must suffer if we are to change. What it means to me is that because of change and ignorance, life sure is hard sometimes.

Dark nights of the soul help us find out just what we are made of. And I want to offer another interpretation of what that means. The dark night of the soul is the faith to let go of everything we think we know, to stand in the dark, naked in our faith and empty of all we have gathered. The unknown is dark. It begs for light. Admitting we don't know and no longer pretending we do is the beginning of wisdom. Having faith only in God enables us to release God in our own image, to open completely to an experience of who we are in God.

In your spiritual practice today, do not think but rest in intelligence. Do not shine the light of your attention but turn off the search. Have faith that the light of God will reveal itself.

The dark night of the soul is the faith that God can find us, even when life appears darkest.

AFFIRMATION

I empty myself of all knowing so I can experience the Presence that knows Itself in me.

Experiencing the Life Living Me

You could not discover the limits of soul, even if you traveled every road to do so, such is the depth of its meaning.

— Heraclitus

It is a Divine Presence within us that every great thinker has sensed, that all the poets have sung about and all the great spiritual teachers have proclaimed.

— Ernest Holmes, "Observations," page 22

I let go of the life I am living and open myself to experience the Life living me. This is the spiritual life. My life is not mine alone, but it belongs to that in which I move, live and have my being.

I let go of the life I am living and open myself to experience the Life living me.

Perhaps one of the greatest illusions we live with is that our life belongs to us. It's not that it is not our life or that we are not at choice about how we live that life, but our life did not come from us but rather for us. Your life and my life come from the same source. Our lives belong not to us but to God.

I let go of the life I am living and open myself to experience the Life living me.

If you and I take the time each day to remember that our life is not ours alone but that there is a magnificent life that is God's life that is unconditional joy, pure wisdom and love eternal, we can better allow this Life to inform our days, rather than the one, as wonderful as it might be, that we tell ourselves is ours.

Today, I let my life be informed by the Life living me. That Life is joy, wisdom and love. I allow what is temporal to be informed by the Eternal.

AFFIRMATION

I let go of the life I am living and open myself to experience the Life living me.

Blessed Are Those Who Wander

Every day, once a day, give yourself a present. Don't plan it. Don't wait for it. Just let it happen. It could be a new shirt at the men's store, a catnap in your office chair or two cups of good, hot black coffee.

— Special Agent Dale Cooper, "Twin Peaks"

We may stumble, but always there is that Eternal Voice, forever whispering within our ear.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 33

Two friends and I once traveled to Snoqualmie, Washington, to visit the beautiful waterfall there, best known for its appearance in the opening credits of my favorite television show, "Twin Peaks."

We parked the car, and I could hear the falls. "This way," I said, and we began to walk through the majestic, moss-covered trees. An hour into the walk, my friends grew frustrated with me. I was wrong. The waterfall was not "this way."

We walked another 30 minutes, thirsty and hungry. We saw a dog running toward us, barking and clearly not happy to see us there. We were so tired, we paused, surrendering to whatever was going to take place. There must have been some invisible fence, because the dog stopped and ran back to its resting place.

Eventually, we got back to the car, a minor miracle in its own right. I could still hear the waterfall. We walked 50 yards the other direction, and there were the majestic Snoqualmie Falls.

Looking back, I would have had it no other way. Sometimes, the long way is the best way. But other times, it is easiest to look, listen and remember what our past taught us. Yes, it's great to enjoy the journey. But sometimes it's best to spend more time enjoying the destination.

AFFIRMATION

I embrace this moment as my ideal destination
and allow the best of adventures to unfold.

Hold On to Your Practice

Who knows how we should be? We simply do. Who knows how we should be? We simply do our best, over and over and over.

— Charlotte Joko Beck

If you believe you are locked in a room, and believe it so firmly that you do not even try the doors and windows, the results are exactly the same as though you were, though the actual truth may be that there is no lock and that you are free to go as you please.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Basic Ideas of Science of Mind," page 42

When everything is falling apart, hold on to your practice. It will see you through. It will reveal to you that the seeming fracture in your relationship with another is only true in one dimension of existence, and there is another dimension in which you are one. In your practice, you can go to this place, surround this other being in light and love, even if you must, for your own well-being, love them from a distance.

Your practice will reveal that even when things aren't OK, you are OK. Indeed, things can be perfectly wonderful and terrible at the same time. You are *that* interesting. Your practice reminds you to pitch a tent in your wholeness rather than in the mess. I know from experience that the best time to remember my wholeness is in the midst of my experience of being broken.

Practice is the time when we remember that our life is not ours alone but belongs to God as well.

There is a story of a church deacon who, at the end of the night, would pray, "God, this is not my church. It is yours. I leave it to you." We can do that with our everyday life as well. "God, this is not my life. It is yours. Do with it what you will."

Today, I release trying to figure it all out, and simply refuse to participate in the problems. God is my solution. Love is my prescription. Listening is my reward.

I refuse to be anything other than blessed.

AFFIRMATION

God, this is your life. Do with it what you will.
I refuse to be anything other than blessed.

Everything Is in Divine Right Order

When we have our body and mind in order, everything else will exist in the right place, in the right way. But usually, without being aware of it, we try to change something other than ourselves; we try to order things outside us. But it is impossible to organize things if you yourself are not in order.

— Shunryu Suzuki

Treatment is not willing things to happen; it is to provide within ourselves an avenue through which they may happen.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 164

One evening, I realized I had locked my keys in my apartment for the third time in three months. I felt like an idiot. Scared of a scolding, I called the apartment manager. No one was home, so I left a message. I happened to have a dinner meeting, so I went to the restaurant, where my companion had yet to arrive. I sat outside, all in a bunch, anxious and mad at myself.

I closed my eyes and began to repeat, "Everything is in divine right order. Everything is in divine right order. Everything is in divine right order."

Realizing I had lost track of time, I opened my eyes and looked at my phone. My manager left a message. "I'm up until 10:30 p.m.; come any time before." I looked in the restaurant and my companion was just sitting down. All was well.

I love that our teaching's founder says he has no idea of what mind is, but that he loves to explore what it does.

Did chanting, "Everything is in divine right order," spring the Creative Mind into action? Did it occupy my mind while the truth came forward? Perhaps it simply put me in touch with a higher reality, always present, yet that I often exclude myself from.

Everything is in divine right order. Everything is in divine right order. Everything is in divine right order.

AFFIRMATION

Everything is in divine right order.

God Is in the Response

Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but only by lack of meaning and purpose.

— Viktor Frankl

Each one of us, in turning to the great inner life, is turning to God. Whoever penetrates this inner life will find it birthless, deathless, fearless, eternal, happy, perfect, complete. Gradually there dawns in consciousness a sense that God, or the Infinite, is flowing into everything.

— Ernest Holmes, "It's Up to You," page 46

On October 12, 2011, as we sat outside our sanctuary in Seal Beach, California, a mass shooting occurred across the street. Eight people were murdered.

We did what we could to help, as families came into our church to await the confirmation of what they already knew, that their loved one was gone, taken in a flash of senseless violence.

I was that local pastor who appears on the news to share how shocked we all were and how terrified, and that we couldn't understand how someone could do something like this, and how the community was coming together with such love.

As true as it all was, there was another truth that it was only just so shocking in these times, and we often can list at least 10 reasons why someone does this. The most-true thing at that moment was certainly the response of love from the community.

Community support and unity and neighborly caring and thoughtfulness: That's how it always should be, right? Many of us struggle to look at tragic incidents and to "find God" in them. I'm not saying God isn't there, but I have not found this framing to be helpful. It's a mystery, but in my experience, God is sometimes not found in the incident. God is found in the response.

Consider: God is not in the incident. God is in the response. Wherever you do not see God, answer the call to be a presence for God to show up.

AFFIRMATION

I am a presence for God's love to be revealed.

Perfect Practice

What do you practice? Whatever you practice, you'll get good at. Some people become more fearful or cynical; some more arrogant or vain; some greedier; some needier; some more combative or close-minded. That's what they practice.

— Karen Maezen Miller

We constantly discard old ideas and take on new and better ones. The mind gives us no rest. The instinct urges us on. The intuition draws us upward.

— Ernest Holmes, "Keys to Wisdom," page 8

Perfect practice does not demand a perfect environment. We may be called to practice when the construction has just started outside. We may be called to practice when a small child demands our constant recognition. We may be called to practice when it feels a little too cold or too hot. Perfect practice is practicing anyway.

This is not to say that environment is not important for our spiritual practice. To have a space we declare as sacred, to ensure as much quiet is available as possible, to ask our loved ones for help — each of these helps us create the proper environment for spiritual practice.

Spiritual practice — prayer and meditation — should call you in the morning, louder than the call of coffee or breakfast or a return to the pillow. When that is the case, *you* are the only environment you must have. Practice makes perfect, but consistent, everyday practice doesn't need to be perfect to be enough.

Karen Maezen Miller said of those who practice, "They are strong and yet tender. Steady yet yielding. Powerful yet gentle. You will recognize them because they resemble the earth you can touch and the sky you cannot contain. It's not that they are super-human; they are more completely human than most of us ever allow ourselves to be."

Perfect practice? Perfect imperfect practice? Practice makes perfect? Practice makes imperfect? Just practice. That is enough.

AFFIRMATION

No matter what seems to be holding on to me,
I hold on to my practice.

Perfect Practice, Not Perfect Composure

Even I don't wake up looking like Cindy Crawford.

— Cindy Crawford

Out of any chaos, we can produce harmony.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 187

Perfect practice is not perfect composure. Yes, it's wonderful when you wake up clear and present, well-rested, with a heart full of love and every part of your body in touch with vitality. Yet, if that were the only time you practiced, how many days in the year would you actually spend practicing?

Perfect practice includes meditating when you're mad. It means praying even though you wish you could go back to bed.

If you practice trying to be perfect, your practice — and you — will become superficial at best. Instead, find balance in your practice by accepting yourself as you are. Even add a little love, some empathy, if you can.

For the longest time, my practice would be interrupted by an, "Oh, shoot." As in, "Oh, shoot. I forgot to call Frieda yesterday." "Oh, shoot, I need to remember to check in on Jeff tonight."

After years of berating myself, I decided to embrace it. I call it "oh, sh#t, meditation." I keep a pen and notebook nearby (phones are wormholes into dimensions you don't want to enter while in practice), and if something comes up, I write it down and get back to my practice. What I've realized is that my practice helps me remember that all that is really happening is that I'm moving through the layers of my surface mind so I can get to the good stuff.

There is no such thing as the perfect meditator. The only perfect meditation is the one that never ends. It's the one you start again, over and over.

AFFIRMATION

I accept myself as I am. This makes my imperfections
perfect and my practice perfect, just the way it is.

The Most Intimate Communication

What is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element that would, if it were shared or expressed, speak most deeply to others.

— Carl Rogers

Whatever intelligence we have is this Spirit in us. Prayer is its own answer.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 153

As a Religious Science minister, I get to train practitioners. One of my favorite things is to watch practitioners-in-training as they begin to pray out loud.

This is challenging for most of us. We've heard someone pray poetically and emphatically at church on Sunday morning and thought to ourselves, "I could never do that. I've never spoken in that way before, not just in such awareness of God, but with such clarity of conviction. Who do I think I am to pray out loud like that?"

And yet, when students begin to pray out loud, it doesn't take long before the flow, the cadence and the clarity of conviction come through. It's not long before the next person hears them pray and thinks, "I could never do that."

What I've learned over the years, is that the students are learning not just to pray but to speak in their true voice.

Prayer, properly spoken, is the most intimate form of communication. Prayer allows us to speak our highest truth, from our most authentic self and in our clearest voice.

When one of us shares our secrets or our hurts with a practitioner, when we speak of things we perhaps have never spoken to anyone else before, this is the same as when we speak our divine truths. When one of us prays with another, we share a moment of spiritual intimacy, of personal revelation.

How might your days be different if you spoke this way, not just once in a while, but all the time?

AFFIRMATION

Today, I speak in prayer — my truest voice,
my most authentic expression of what I believe.

I Couldn't Have Failed Without You

It's a sign of mediocrity when you demonstrate gratitude with moderation.

— Roberto Benigni

The Power in you is you.

— Ernest Holmes, "This Thing Called Life," page 83

Two years into my ministry, I saw myself as a failure. I started a Sunday gathering designed for younger people and agnostics at the Improv Comedy Club at the Spectrum Mall in Irvine, California. We experienced some mixed success, but the endeavor left me broke. Apparently, hosting a church for the unchurched isn't the best business model. My vision had not been realized. I toasted a friend and board member at an Irish pub, "Thank you. I couldn't have failed without you."

Months later I was working as an assistant minister and was still down on myself.

I was reading Viktor Frankl, and God said through him to me, "Don't aim at success. The more you aim at it and make it a target, the more you are going to miss. For success, like happiness, cannot be pursued; it must ensue, and it only does so as the unintended side effect of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself."

I took my vision board down and decided to focus only on doing a good job at being a minister that day. "God, I just want to do a good job and serve as many people as possible."

It wasn't long before I was called by Rev. Dr. Peggy Price to Seal Beach, California, where I served seven years. Then came a call from Roger Teel to serve at Mile Hi.

Today, as I rise, I have one focus: to do a good job. God can take care of the rest.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I focus on doing whatever is before me to the
best of my ability. I let God take care of the rest.

Always on the Mind of God

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.

— Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection

It is not merely a new theory about God that we are looking for; it is the actual power of God that we must lay hold of.

— Ernest Holmes, "This Thing Called Life," page 5

I had one of those mornings again, one of those mornings where I got started thinking about something other than God. Usually, I don't do it on purpose. A habitual glance at the phone, a reminding of something inarticulate I said the day before, continuing an ongoing argument in my head with so and so. It's easy to forget God, but I think we underestimate how unlikely it is that we are forgotten.

Most of us have written a love poem to someone at some point that went something like, "You are the last thing I think about when I go to bed at night and the first thing I think about when I wake up in the morning."

As much as we may love the people we care for, spiritual living calls us to the Sacred, as we create a sanctuary of rest in the evening and when we pave the foundation of consciousness in our minds for a new day.

I forgot that this morning. My mind went to the family budget, and what I perceive as my partner's slight, and that situation at work that I should have prevented.

If this happens to you like it just happened to me, consider this: Although God may not always be on my mind, I am always on the mind of God. I am in God's first thought and God's final thought and never forgotten in between.

Phew! Now I can remember.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I will not leave God alone. In spirit, in body, in soul, God is always with me, and I with God.

A Law of Spiritual Living

Now the dismal autumn days have begun and one has to try and get light from within.

— Dietrich Bonhoeffer

God is an immediate Presence that can be found only, and directly and immediately, in our own soul.

— Ernest Holmes, "Keys to Wisdom," page 24

There's a law of spiritual living: What is within you is always greater than any challenge taking place around you. This is what Albert Camus meant when he said that even in the midst of winter, he found within himself an invincible summer. This is what Viktor Frankl meant when he spoke about the individual's ability, no matter how unchangeable a situation, to change himself.

This is what Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. meant when he talked about the ability of God to make a way where there is no way. This is what the Holmes brothers, Ernest and Fenwicke, meant when they spoke of the creator God that hides Itself in you and me.

What does it mean to you?

There is a power within me that is always greater than any challenge taking place around me. To me, the law of spiritual living means I have the ability to endure loss, transcend failure and overcome death. It means I keep nurturing and listening to and relating with this Power within me — the greatest truth, power and blessing there is.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian killed by the Nazis near the end of World War II, put it this way: "I'm still discovering, right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing, we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God."

AFFIRMATION

What is within me is always greater than any challenge taking place around me.

A Jedi in a Car Seat

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

— Matthew 19:14

Life will give a love to all who know how to receive.

— Ernest Holmes, "Creative Ideas," page 32

I'm driving my daughter to school, running a little late and, thus, a little high tempered. I don't know about you, but my biggest fear isn't public speaking or dying alone, it's that I might be a minute late to anything.

My daughter sees this me who isn't as kind and patient as normal. We had a tough exchange on our way out the door. "Why aren't your boots on?" I asked. "It's time to go."

My daughter is silent in the car for a while but then says, "Daddy, I want you to know that even when you're being mean, I forgive you."

Grace. Relief. Awakening. The end of my own self-rejection. "This is what salvation feels like," I say to myself. Saved by an angel, a muse, a Buddha, a Jedi in a car seat. I wonder if this is part of what Jesus meant when he said you have to be like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Can I be wise enough, deep enough, loving enough to forgive like a child? Who am I to deserve such grace, to be forgiven by a child?

Perhaps to enter God's kingdom, not in the afterlife but in this life, is to embrace a childlike forgiveness and to accept wholeheartedly that we are always God's beloved child, even when we are too busy being too grown up to remember it.

AFFIRMATION

I embrace a childlike forgiveness and, in doing so,
fully embrace that I am a child of God.

Do What You Love, Kid

Three strikes may be out in baseball, but life is not baseball.

— U.S. Representative James Clyburn

I recognize the harmonious Self that I am, and I know this Self will find its perfect expression.

— Ernest Holmes, "Richer Living," page 198

I remember the last day of my son's athletic career. I loved taking him to catch grounders and fly balls, and he looked adorable in his uniform on game days, trying to keep his attention on the game from the imaginative wonderland that is right field.

There's a school of thought that you should only do what you are good at so you can excel at it. There is another school that says you should keep up with what you are bad at, too, so that you don't quite stink at anything but are only mediocre at a number of different things. I wanted my son to know at least a little of everything.

I got the call while he was at baseball practice. The head coach hit Gavin in the foot with a pitch. Mom had taken him to the emergency room.

I arrived and waited an hour before Gavin came out on crutches, a cast on his foot and the biggest smile on his face I had ever seen. That's when I truly learned that life is not about excelling at what you are good at, nor is it about making sure you're grandly mediocre at everything. It's about doing what you love. Gavin, just do what you love, kid. We'll let life take it from there.

What if today, you just did what you loved, and let life take care of the rest? Don't just do what you're good at, don't just try to fit in, but do what you love. I know of no greater way to set the creative medium into action.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I do what I love, and I feel the presence of God's love in me.

Missing the Bull's-Eye

*In the archer there is a resemblance to the mature person.
When he misses the bull's-eye, he turns and seeks the reason
for his failure in himself.*

— Confucius

*No matter what the negations of yesterday may have been, the
affirmations of today may rise triumphant and transcendent
over them.*

— Ernest Holmes, "Richer Living," page 3

I have a center to my life I try to hit each day. I ask myself:
Did I choose love over blame? Did I choose compassion over
grievance? Did I choose truth over superficiality?

Some days, I hit a bull's-eye. Sometimes, I miss my target.
Those days when I miss, I remind myself of the importance of
not blaming other people for that.

Chuang-Tzu wrote, "If a man is crossing a river and an empty
boat collides with his own skiff, even though he be a bad-tem-
pered man, he will not become very angry. But if he sees a man
in the boat, he will shout at him to steer clear. ... Yet if the boat
were empty, he would not be shouting, and not angry."

In a similar way, when we blame others, we lose track of
where our boat is going. We lose our direction, our purpose, our
composure. We make the obstruction our focus, and in that we
miss every time.

Hitting the bull's-eye requires focus, not aim. What am I
focused on today? Love, compassion, truthfulness — those are
the arrows in my quiver.

When someone or something obstructs my way, I turn back
to myself. Do I want to be angry, or do I want to get what I want?
Do I want to become who I don't want to be in this circumstance,
or can I use it to become even that much more of who I am?

Shoot, I missed again. Thank you, God. I have another oppor-
tunity to practice.

AFFIRMATION

Today, my focus is my compassion,
my aim is my truth, my direction is love.

Paris, Maybe Another Time

I can't change the world but I change the world in me.

— Bono (of the band U2)

*Our thought is operated on by a universal creativity that is
infinite in its capacity to accomplish.*

— Ernest Holmes, "How to Use the Science of Mind," page 2

I remember the night I knew I would propose to my partner,
April Ann. It was one evening at Seal Beach CSL in California
when our board president and dear friend, Yvonne, asked
me how my relationship was going. It had been a hard week at
home, and I had taken the challenges with April Ann as a sign
that maybe things were not working out. "It's OK," I replied.
"But it's hard work sometimes." Yvonne said, "Josh, I've been
married for 50 years, and it is still hard work sometimes."

Finally, the reality snuck in through my ego and naiveté: The
hard work was not a problem; it's what bears the fruit of the
marriage.

I remember the night I proposed. We had a babysitter for our
10-year-old (who I already claimed as my own) for only one
night. I was recovering from pneumonia and wanted to propose
on the beach where there just happened to be a candlelight vigil
taking place for someone who lost their life. Sad, yes. Romantic,
no. I got down on one knee. So did she. Could a messy proposal
be a recipe for a perfect marriage?

We talked about going to Paris for our honeymoon. When
we told our son we were getting married, we knew his response
was going to be important. "Where are we going on the honey-
moon?" he asked. Paris? Maybe another time.

Hard work is not a sign that something is wrong. Imperfec-
tion can lead to something perfect. Paris is nothing compared to
the love of a family.

AFFIRMATION

Where the work is the hardest, the fruit is the sweetest.

The Little Things

Little things make big things happen.

— John Wooden

You can never be less but must forever be more yourself as this Life within you unfolds through your experiences.

— Ernest Holmes, "Living the Science of Mind," page 116

There's a divine contradiction about the little things. In my experience, when we take care of the little things — like basic kindness and authenticity, daily spiritual practice, touching base regularly with our most prized connections — the big things take care of themselves. When giving sermons, my goal is to never to try to hit a home run. I aim to just hit a single. Every once in a while, I rejoice that it goes over the fence.

Whenever I get overwhelmed, I try to remember the fundamentals, and things tend to get back to harmony.

And yet, in the same way, the little things can also be the most dangerous. A day of perfect composure can be lost over a dirty dish not placed in the sink. A little thing like saying a genuine "I love you," with eyes trained on the phone, may come back to haunt us, in the same way as not making that person in front of you important enough as you buzz off to handle that oh-so-important to-do list.

Robert Anton Wilson said, "You are precisely as big as what you love and precisely as small as what you allow to annoy you."

Today, stay as big as what you love, and don't let yourself get trapped in the small things. Today, do the little things that matter and have no time for the small things that don't. Today, instead of being whatever annoys you, be what you love.

AFFIRMATION

As I take care of the little things this day,
the big things take care of themselves.

When I Leave Myself Out

Only when the pain of our dividedness becomes more than we can bear do most of us embark on an inner journey toward living "divided no more."

— Parker Palmer

I walk in confidence with love, which I feel to be everywhere present, within and around and through me. In that love, I am safe, secure and cared for.

— Ernest Holmes, "Creative Ideas," page 113

Sometimes I wonder if I am worthy of being who I seek to tell the world I am. Me, the person who stayed up until one in the morning, and ate all those peanut butter M&Ms. Me, the person who got angry and yelled at his wife. Me, who while sharing precious time with his children wished he could be playing a video game instead. Is that me worthy?

Part of the call to practice spiritual living is to remember that even when I feel I'm not worthy, I am worthy. Brokenness is a real and sometimes even a valuable experience in life, when approached with a consciousness of wholeness.

I wonder if what's missing for many of us at times isn't integrity, but rather the ability to include ourselves in our own consciousness of wholeness.

Maybe that's what my problem is. Maybe it's not the M&Ms, the anger, the little resentments. Maybe it's keeping myself out of this consciousness of wholeness that prevents me from feeling worthy.

Whenever I catch myself leaving myself out, I'm going to welcome myself back in. Whenever I leave myself outside of wholeness, I am going to welcome myself back in.

This is how we live a spiritual life in the world, with a consciousness of wholeness — one of perspective, encouragement, compassion and possibility that can be applied to even the most challenging, hurtful or resentful experiences.

Our teaching doesn't teach us to turn away but to see all, including ourselves, with wholeness.

AFFIRMATION

Even when I feel I'm not worthy, I know that I am worthy.
I embrace self-love and self-compassion.

Choose Solitude

Solitude is not a private therapeutic place. Rather, it is the place of conversion, the place where the old self dies and the new self is born.

— Henri Nouwen

There is, flowing through us, a creative Something.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 38

There are two types of being alone. The first is isolation. In isolation, I feel totally cut off from everyone and everything. I feel utterly alone and disconnected. In isolation, I feel outside of life, outside the universal flow and not myself. There is nothing lonelier than isolation.

I feel isolated when I hold too tightly to the need to be right. I feel it when I act in blame and judgment. I can feel totally isolated not just when I'm alone but also when I'm at a family dinner or in a room full of people.

Then there is solitude, the second type of being alone. Solitude is, in my experience, the most surefire way to realize and feel that I am never alone. Solitude offers utter connection with all of life. True solitude is when God announces Itself in my soul.

I experience solitude when I let go of the busy world and turn inward. Solitude can be in spiritual practice, in nature or in creative work. Rather than disconnecting me, solitude makes me aware of my best connections.

Isolation detracts. Solitude enriches. In isolation, we lose ourselves. In solitude, we find ourselves again and again.

Today, I cherish solitude — the time where my inner life takes precedence over my busy life, the moments of awareness that I am connected with something Infinite, the place where the Creative Muse gets to work through me. Solitude can be as healing as our best friends at time.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I seek refuge in solitude and listen for the voice of the Divine announcing Itself in my soul.

I Am for Me and Not Against Me

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

— Matthew 5:8

If we learn to harmonize with everything that transpires today, tomorrow will blossom like a new flower in our experience.

— Ernest Holmes, "Living the Science of Mind," page 193

It's one thing to say the universe is for us and not against us. What about: My mind is for me and not against me. My body is for me and not against me.

American psychologist Carl Rogers stated that the goal of his counseling and therapeutic work was to assist clients in learning to trust their own organism. In other words, if we could just fully trust, we would be the most well-adjusted individuals there could ever be.

Today, I trust my mind to work for me. I trust my body to work for me. I trust the wisdom they contain and demonstrate for my highest and best good. What about: My feelings are for me and not against me. My sexuality is for me and not against me. Today, I feel just right.

U.S. President Ronald Reagan used to caution, "Trust but verify." Having full trust in ourselves and in life does not mean we do not have discernment. We can trust even our skepticism. When we truly live in trust, we don't just experience a spiritual realization. We realize we've earned that trust through great effort, trial and error, understanding motivations and a whole lot more. What about: My challenges are for me and not against me. My relationships are for me and not against me.

The universe is for you and not against you. If true, it must follow that also means everything in the universe is for you, including you.

AFFIRMATION

My mind, my body and my entire being are for me and not against me. We live in harmony.

A Safe Place, a Sacred Space

Your heart is a polished mirror. You must wipe it clean of the veil of dust that has gathered upon it, because it is destined to reflect the light of divine secrets.

— Al-Ghazzali

Not only shall I walk in this Light, I shall radiate It.

— Ernest Holmes, “How to Use the Science of Mind,” page 131

I am a safe place. I am sacred space.

We talk about creating safe places — supportive environments where people can let their hair down and share openly; loving environments where brave conversations can be had, where anger and grief can be heard without needing to be fixed or tangled with; where truth can be spoken, and the individual held in wholeness, even if in the midst of an experience of extreme brokenness.

To be considered safe, such a place demands confidentiality, listening, non-judgment. We talk about creating sacred spaces — where Spirit is at the center, and we behave not like self-preserving egos, but like souls; where we are one.

To be sacred, such a space requires prayerfulness, openness, magic. Sometimes a space doesn't contain what it needs to feel safe or to support the sacred. In those places, remember this: You are a safe place. You are sacred space. You are an environment for deep listening and acceptance. You are a presence for God and spiritual becoming.

You are a safe place. You are a sacred space.

When it comes to supporting others in growth and positive transformation, nothing is more valuable than being a safe place, a sacred space. If I live knowing I had been that more often than not, I am a happy man. God knows, I remember everyone who has been that for me.

A safe place isn't just something you create. It's something you participate in. A sacred space isn't just something you hold, but something you become.

AFFIRMATION

I am a safe place. I am sacred space.

I Practice Love

I never saw the morning 'til I stayed up all night. / I never saw the sunshine 'til you turned out the light. / I never saw my hometown until I stayed away too long. / I never heard the melody until I needed a song.

— Tom Waits

The radiant presence of Love and Peace dissipates fear, hate and confusion.

— Ernest Holmes, “Living the Science of Mind,” page 331

I experience fear, but I practice love. I experience anger, but I practice love. I experience hurt, but I practice love.

As long as you live a full life, you will find negative experiences as part of the journey. The purpose of spiritual living is not to live a life of comfort and untroubled ease but rather, as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. suggested, to give us the faith needed to confront the challenges of everyday life.

Here's the good news. You can be in the troubles of the world but not of them. You are strong enough to experience your pain, others' pain and the world's pain, and still transmute it into a conscious and tenacious love. That's how powerful you are.

I experience fear, but I practice love. I experience anger, but I practice love. I experience hurt, but I practice love.

Is it really wise to be fearless? Does it enlighten us to never get angry? To never hurt, is that what it means to be strong? I don't think so. The problem with negative emotions is that we think they exist because of something other than love. When we see that their true meaning is love, we recognize that they become vehicles to get us back to love.

I experience fear, but I practice love. I experience anger, but I practice love. I experience hurt, but I practice love.

Love in the face of fear takes strength. Love in response to anger is healing. Love, in spite of hurt, forgives. No matter what happens to you in your experience today, choose to practice love.

AFFIRMATION

I experience fear, but I practice love. I experience anger, but I practice love. I experience hurt, but I practice love.

Drive Vs. Motivation

Just do your job. Then let go.

— “Tao Te Ching”

Nothing emanates from my consciousness other than that which blesses, builds and heals.

— Ernest Holmes, “Creative Ideas,” page 155

My friend Randy Ferguson shared something powerful with me about the difference between drive and motivation. He shared that, for him, being driven was ego inspired. Drive is the competitive spirit. It is that part of us that wants to succeed and prove wrong any naysayers. Motivation, however, is the excitement to share knowledge, space, talent and time in service to a cause greater than ourselves.

That distinction brought a change to my heart and helped me multiple times when I felt overanxious about giving a talk or when wondering who I think I am to write a book or teach a class. The answer: Who cares? I am excited to share what I get to share, participate in what I get to participate in, connect at the level I get to connect with others.

There is no doubt, I am a driven person, and I will continue to be so. But it can prove exhausting. From now on, I will seek to be less driven and more motivated. This is more true to who I really am, more meaningful and a whole lot more fun.

In the movie “Chariots of Fire,” runner Eric Liddel says, “I believe God made me for a purpose. He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel God’s pleasure.”

What do you do that inspires the pleasure of Spirit within you? Keep doing just that.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I am motivated to be an expression of Spirit in all I do — no pressure, just the organic joy of being one with my Source.

Give an Hour a Day

Everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence, and I learn, whatever state I may be in, therein to be content.

— Helen Keller

A certain time should be taken definitely each day for the enlargement of consciousness. This is done by reminding your imagination that the field with which it deals is limitless.

— Ernest Holmes, “Effective Prayer,” page 34

Henri Nouwen was a Catholic priest who got closer to God by attending Zen retreats, who was not particularly private about being gay and who wanted everyone to know that, Christian or not, God wanted them to know that they were the beloved.

Nouwen faced challenges. He struggled with attachments that would leave him with deep fears and experiences of abandonment: “Every morning, alone or in the company of others, I spend at least one hour in quiet prayer and meditation. I say every morning, but there are exceptions. Fatigue, busyness and preoccupation often serve as arguments for not praying. Yet without this one hour a day for God, my life loses its coherence, and I start experiencing my days as a series of random incidents and accidents rather than divine appointments and encounters.”

One day he met Mother Teresa. He began by laying out his issues and concerns to get advice from the future saint. She said only one thing to him. “Well, when you spend one hour a day adoring your Lord and never do anything which you know to be wrong, you will be fine.”

She spoke to him from a higher level of consciousness, one that did not dismiss the pain and concern he was feeling, but that spoke to the reality of his soul and his mission on Earth.

What good advice for all of us: Let us give an hour a day to God, try to do no harm, and trust we’ll be all right.

AFFIRMATION

I adore God this day and seek to do no harm.
I let the rest take care itself.

Don't Unplug; Plug In

There are some flowers that blossom only in the night.

— Carl Jung

God is Life; not some life but all life.

— Ernest Holmes, "This Thing Called Life," page 6

When evening comes, don't unplug. Plug in. Don't turn off. Turn on.

Yes, when we say, "I need to unplug," we usually mean from the busyness of our lives. When we express a desire to turn off, we really mean we want to shut off the inner chatter and put away our to-do list.

If we aren't careful, however, we may be saying we no longer want to operate ourselves, that we no longer want to exist. This leads to acts of escapism and perhaps using food or alcohol or the newsfeed to numb ourselves.

If your life focuses only on the superficial, then this is understandable. Yet, if you fill your life only with superficiality, were you ever really on in the first place?

Mindfulness is the tool that helps us plug into our soul. Mindful journaling, resting, reading, watching, eating, celebrating all require feeling, reflection and focus. Over time, mindfulness creates a fuller life, a more alive you. That tired part of you may protest, even believing that mindfulness will exhaust you, but the opposite is true.

Only you can know if the evening activities you engage in are meant to awaken or numb you. Sometimes I get home and fix a strong drink, often as a way to celebrate something. But at other times, the purpose of the drink is to try to shut down.

You can engage in mindful streaming, scrolling, even just lying on the couch. Making sure you possess your consciousness during these activities keeps them from possessing you.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I engage in activities mindfully,
feeling more alive, more myself and more of the Spirit.

Today, I Am a Revealer of Truth

God is contained even in a drop of the ocean, and yet not even the seven seas can encompass God.

— Mahatma Gandhi

Genius is nothing less than the ability of the intellect, will and emotion to surrender themselves to something greater than themselves.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Beverly Hills Lectures," page 6

God, today You make Yourself known in my mind. Not a moment passes without You revealing Yourself in my awareness. God, this day You make Your presence felt in my heart. Your presence expands my heart to remind me that it can receive and accept as much love as I am ready for.

God, this day You make Your strength felt in my humility. In each mistake, moment of hubris and opportunity to listen deeper not taken, You call me back to when and where You are, to begin again.

The blessings of Your presence — of peace, of completeness, of plenty and of creativity — fill my hours, ground my emotions, inform my work and enliven my interactions.

I am so grateful to live my life with You, God. I am so glad for Your renewing spirit making right my relationships and bonds, making me a blessing to others, helping me to not only achieve but to believe that I am enough, that life is enough, that my loved ones are enough.

God, today I seek intimate connections that set my heart into adventure and prosperity that supports me in rejuvenation and creativity. I seek the courage to listen more deeply and the willingness to be truly heard. And may I stay open to complete what You might accomplish in and through me.

God, Your self-knowingness misses no one, excludes nothing, embraces everything, is endlessly available.

As Walt Whitman said, You are the truth hidden in all things. If that be so, then I pray to be a revealer.

AFFIRMATION

Today, I am a revealer of truth.

Begin Again, Again and Again

Within your own mentality there lies a source of energy stronger than electricity, more potent than high explosives, unlimited and inexhaustible. You only need to make conscious contact with it to set it working in your affairs.

— Emmet Fox

So shall Thy wisdom guide me, Thy presence dwell within me, Thy love keep and Thy life envelop me now and forevermore.

— Ernest Holmes, "The Science of Mind," page 550

Begin again. Begin again and again.

In my experience, there really is no such thing as a beginning and an ending. One leads into the other. Both are always and never happening at the same time.

As a job or an event or a relationship comes to an end in the way we have known it, I believe it is helpful to identify what I call the *begending*. What is truly complete and what am I now moving into or willing to move into?

Too often, I have become stuck on a page for too long, not understanding or willing to comprehend what has taken place. A begending turns the page, always knowing two things: one, that there is a whole story, and two, that what is to come is as great, if not greater than, what has been.

Norman Lear would say, "Over, and next." One evening, while giving a farewell speech, he admitted that as wonderful as the evening was, he already was looking forward to the taste of coffee the next morning, to what was next. "Reflecting on this later, I imagined building a hammock between over and next, and realized: that is where the struggle to live in the moment resides."

As we embrace our life not as a series of beginnings and endings but as a collection of begendings, we begin to see that embracing and letting go, properly understood, are the same thing.

AFFIRMATION

I let go of what was so that I can fully step into what is, beginning again and again.



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We honor all people, faith paths and religions. Our sacred focus is creating a world that works for everyone. Find "What We Believe" on page 10.