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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

PROJECT PORTFOLIO:

# THE WATERING PLACE™: CREATING SPACE FOR SPIRITUALLY DEHYDRATED AND HURRIED WOMEN

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

PORTLAND SEMINARY

BY:

DONNA M COX

PROJECT FACULTY:

SUNGGU YANG

PORTLAND, OREGON

APRIL 2023

PORTLAND SEMINARY
George Fox University

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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This certifies that the doctoral Project Portfolio of

Donna M. Cox

has been approved by
the Evaluation Committee on March 9, 2023
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Semiotics, Church, and Culture.

Evaluation Committee:

Primary Project Faculty: Sunggu Yang, PhD

Second Project Faculty: Gregg Borror, DMin

Lead Mentor: Leonard I. Sweet, PhD

Evaluation Committee Referee: Clifford Berger, DMin

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# Dedication

Hezekiah Nathaniel and Amaya Ashé, you give me hope for the future. Soar!

# Acknowledgments

As we say in the Black Church, I first give "honor to God who is the head of my life." I had no intention of earning another advanced degree. Of course, I tentatively looked at programs but felt no pull to enroll, that is, until I attended a Black Preaching Symposium at Baylor University. In that space, God began to speak to me about more preparation. Shortly afterward, Leonard Sweet returned to Dayton to speak for my home church. The tug to enroll in the DMin program became a compulsion. I am so grateful that God continues to call me into service and for using Leonard Sweet and Portland Seminary to usher me into the next season of ministry.

I am grateful to my family for their continual and unqualified support: Dr. Jonathan M. Cox, who followed his mom into the professorate and coached me early in the process as one of 'his' grad students; Jamie Cox, photographer extraordinaire and the purveyor of Condado tacos, Hezekiah Cox, an aspiring engineer and outstanding musician, Charissa Cox, incredible armor-bearer, and Gerald Cox, chief cook, bottle washer and parent taxi-driver.

I learned so much from my cohort, jokingly referred to as the COVID-19 cohort, which is filled with the most amazing people: David Bach, Scott Jones, Julie Schendel, Terry Crist, Matt Rice, Andy Gabruch, Donna Pisani, Laura Holland, Brian Russell, Kevin Miller, Stacey Spence, Joanna Wirtz, Jeremy DeWeerdt, Blair Farley, Chris Richardson, Philip Berlin, and Brian Humphreys. I am especially appreciative of the other three members of the Exhausted Doctorate Divas: Laura, Stacey, and Julie. We talked each other off the ledge many times with humor and prayers.

I am indebted to Sunggu Yang, my project faculty, who supported me and the project idea through its many iterations. Clifford Berger, Loren Kerns, and Heather Rainey have been true examples of servant-leaders from the enrollment process through completing the doctoral program. I am so honored to have worked with them. Leonard Sweet was the cause of many facial expressions, from confusion at some of the reading – books I would never have chosen to read on my own - to revelation as my eyes and heart received new information. I grew so much during this program.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to three women who joined the ancestors during my doctoral journey but who are, in many ways, responsible for any accomplishments I have ever made.

- It has been said that every child needs at least one person who adores her. Charnetta Williams, my godmother, was this person for me. She supported me emotionally and financially, always believing in my abilities.
- Lillian Yarbrough came into my life when I was in high school and shepherded me through some of the most difficult years of growing up. She taught me how to love people who might not always be loveable.
- Peggy Ann West was my favorite cousin. Peggy had Down Syndrome and defied all odds by living until she was 57 years old. Peggy reminded me to dance, laugh, take time to color, collect pencils, cards, or stacks of paper for no other reason than they brought joy. Peggy reminded me of the need to enjoy life without worry, a lesson I continue to work on.

# Epigraph

Our patterns of work and rest reveal what we believe to be true about God and ourselves. God alone requires no limits on his activity. To rest is to acknowledge that we humans are limited by design. We are created for rest just as surely as we are created for labor. An inability or unwillingness to cease from our labors is a confession of unbelief, an admission that we view ourselves as creator and sustainer of our own universes.

*Jen Wilkin, Ten Words to Live by: Delighting in and Doing What God Commands*

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# List of Abbreviations

DMI – Doxology Ministries International, Inc

WPP – Watering Place Portfolio

EHS – Ebony Heritage Singers

# Research Method

This Doctoral Project utilized a blended research and design methodology called 'Collaborative Design for Ministry and Nonprofit Contexts.' In Collaborative Design, practitioners work with stakeholder representatives to address a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) in their context. Using a combination of bibliographic resources, local knowledge derived from stakeholder Workshops, and an iterative process of continuous adjustment using 'just enough' feedback information at each juncture of development, practitioners produce an application-oriented Project that seeks to effect Christ-centered change.

# Abstract

**NPO Statement and Ministry Context:** *The Watering Place™: Creating Space for Spiritually Dehydrated and Hurried Women* seeks to address the NPO: In a speedy, frenzied world, women need [a] space to pursue healing, spiritual connection, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves. This project grew out of my position as founder of Doxology Ministries International, Inc., a 501c3 religious organization. For over fifteen years, I have been leading retreats focusing on women.

**Key Insights:** The Doctoral Project allowed me to explore issues facing women more deeply, particularly conditions impacting women's health, such as the Hurried Woman and Superwoman syndromes. The project examined physical, emotional, and spiritual issues resulting from rushing and the Biblical mandate for balancing work with rest. The project also probed the benefits of taking retreats. While multi-day retreats are powerful, they remain luxuries for women who already feel overworked and under-resourced financially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. This knowledge led to reassessing the original plan to create a retreat center to consider methods that do not, at least initially, require a significant investment of time or resources. The Watering Place concept was the response. The Watering Place™ is a portable construct that provides low-stake, high-impact opportunities for women to temporarily break away from the Rushing, Hurried, Superwoman complex. It centers holding space for oneself and others.

**Project Description:** The Doctoral Project has two parts. Part One is a Handbook examining overburdened schedules and spiritual dehydration against broken work-rest cycles. It investigates various modalities for holding space. Part Two is the Watering Place Portfolio, a collection of Watering Sessions and other resources: prompts, poems, song lyrics, journals, spiritual practices, coloring pages, paintings, and memes. The Portfolio is a living document with sessions and resources continually added, tested, or updated for efficacy.

# Introduction

## Project Overview

*The Watering Place™: Creating Space for Spiritually Dehydrated and Hurried Women* seeks to address the NPO: *In a speedy, frenzied world, women need [a] space to pursue healing, spiritual connection, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.* Though my lens is Christocentric, the NPO is common to all women. The Doctoral Project has two parts. Part One is a Handbook examining overburdened schedules and spiritual dehydration against broken work-rest cycles. It investigates and centers various modalities for holding space. Part Two is the Watering Place Portfolio, a collection of Watering Sessions and other resources: prompts, poems, song lyrics, journals, spiritual practices, coloring pages, paintings, and memes. The Portfolio is a living document with sessions and resources continually added, tested, or updated for efficacy. The project grew out of my love for gathering women in safe spaces. The Doctor of Ministry program provided the impetus to dig deeper into women's needs and the benefits of gathering.

## Discovery Phase

I began the first year of my doctoral studies with a desire to establish a full-service retreat center. I hoped to discover the best ways to create a business plan for the retreat center and seek funding. I admit to being somewhat naïve in my understanding of the complexity of such an endeavor. While I was unclear about that, I was confident in my passion for providing opportunities for women to gather, reflect, and support each other. The initial NPO statement was this: *In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover whom God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.*

In the Discovery Workshop, we spent a significant amount of time thinking about the Retreat Center idea, a concept laden with preconceived notions about what a center should provide and who could take advantage of it. Once thinking in that direction, it was difficult to think creatively. However, the sixteen women who participated articulated the issues in ways that opened my eyes to the broader need. Participants included women from their early 30s to early 70s, working and retired, Black, White, Dominican, married, single, divorced, and one married Lesbian. They came from multiple parts of the country: the Dayton area, Tennessee, New Jersey, Florida, Washington, DC, and Kentucky. After completing the process outlined by the seminary, the group created the Discovery Statement: *Considering women, we've discovered that women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves. If solved, it would mean more healed women impacting the world.*

The Seven Key Insights from the workshop are recounted in Chapter Four of the Handbook. Here I tell two of them. First, taking time to rest, be quiet, focus/refocus, (re)filled, grieve, remember who she is, or be renewed does not happen organically for women. Second, if the NPO is addressed, women would live from a place of validation, feel empowered to speak and live their truth, set more explicit boundaries, and be more intentional about not operating from an internal deficit. The One-On-One Interviews were equally informative.

Each interviewee brought a wealth of knowledge and experiences to the process. One was the senior vice president of a major corporation, another was the Director of a university academic center, and the third was a physician at a large hospital. All agreed that while retreats can be a valuable resource, there is a need for ongoing space where women can continually process, refresh, and engage issues facing them. There was a consensus that retreats alone cannot satisfy deeper needs that may arise or are systemic. Among these might be trauma healing, retreats may unintentionally leave people more broken if mishandled. Thus, it is necessary to figure out how to address this best. Creating a space for women to gather is multifaceted; many factors must be researched and clarified, including establishing the targeted market, associated costs & fee structures, content/offerings, outreach, and assessment.

## Design Phase

Going into the Design Phase, I appreciated using the NPO as the 'fuzzy' goal. I began to understand that there might be other, maybe even better, ways to address the need that did not necessarily lead directly to a fully operable Retreat Center. As a result, I made two small but significant shifts to the NPO statement. I changed the word "place" to "space" to indicate that space does not have to be a physical location. For the same reason, the letter a was bracketed [a]. Multiple ways exist to create and hold space for healing, restoration, and empowerment beyond a physical location. I discuss this at length in my project. I also made the NPO statement declarative, taking ownership: *I want to create [a] space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves*.

Six women participated in The Design Workshop and represented a nice mixture of ages, from the early 20s to the early 60s. Of the workshop participants, three were African American women, and three were White women—no one identified as non-binary, trans, or lesbian. Two women were in ministry: an ordained Methodist pastor and a former pastor who has since deconstructed her belief system. Two are currently married, two divorced, and two single, the elder never having married. Careers were varied: public school teacher, college administrator, nurses' aide, pastor, life coach, and personal trainer/minister. The resulting diversity of workshop participants resulted in lively discussions and varying perspectives. I performed One-on-One Interviews with three women having diverse backgrounds and experiences: Late-50s: former bank executive, African American, married, two children; Mid-50s: college professor and Endowed Chair in Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, married, one child and Late-60s: former Executive Director of local YWCA, African American with three adult children.

The Design Workshop and One-x-One interviews confirmed the findings from the Discovery Workshop. Despite living through the height of a pandemic that brought the world to a standstill, our culture remains steeped in a narrative valuing busyness above nearly everything else. This pervasive value system impacts women's mental, physical, and spiritual health.

Three Big Ideas emerged from the Design Workshop:

1. Create a Retreat-In-A-Box (RIAB): People would purchase the box containing supplies needed to create what they need to create their own retreat experiences in their homes or with groups of their choosing.
2. Use existing facilities and build collaborations with others to host ongoing retreats.
3. Rent or buy a building for various retreat experiences, which would be the first step and testing ground for a future, fully operative retreat center.

As I began researching the Retreat-In-A-Box idea, I quickly learned there were multiple problems with attempting this project. First, subscription box services are very complicated businesses. They need a level of business acumen I simply do not have. In addition, they require a depth of psychological and marketing expertise that would be well out of the scope of the Doctoral project. The most significant impetus came from talking with people who had participated in the various workshops and discussions I engaged in throughout the first two years of the Doctor of Ministry degree project. Many women *need* to get away from their day-to-day routines to comfortably engage in Sabbath time practices, even if only for short periods. As necessary as the activities are, a kit cannot replace the sense of being in a community with others. As a result, after consulting with my peer group and Faculty Mentor, I decided not to pursue this prototype further.

Prototypes two and three had similar elements so I folded them into one. Thus, my research question became, how can hosting short-term, intimate retreats in my home be an incubator for the longer-term goal of purchasing or renting a dedicated space? I hosted two retreats in my house. The first retreat was intentionally different from what most people anticipate for a 'Christian' retreat. The focal activities were salsa and bachata lessons. The women gathered for a simple meal to coordinate with the dancing theme. I invited them to privately identify emotions they had experienced the prior week and the day of the retreat. After the dancing lessons, they revisited their emotions chart. Everyone reported a noticeable upsweep in the feeling of emotional wellness. The second retreat was more traditional. The focal activity for this retreat was based on the Japanese technique called Kintsugi. The goal was to reassemble a broken cup and highlight the seams with gold paint. As the women worked, there was much talking. They asked each other about their work and families. They commented on their work, laughed together when pieces fell apart, and genuinely enjoyed a good time. When each person completed the task, she journaled about the experience. For the last segment of the retreat, we regathered to process the experience and share the revelations each person believed she gained from the activity.

## Delivery Phase

**Most Viable Prototype:** Hosting the two retreats solidified the need to create multiple low-stake, high-impact opportunities for women to gather and engage in life-giving activities. I discovered that two hours on a weeknight is a workable time investment and that the 30-60-30 (Gather-Activity-Reflection/close) framework works. My home will serve as the primary ministry site in the short term. I am fortunate to live in a home that makes this possible. The Watering Place™, a portable construct, was birthed. The original intent was to create a series of activities for retreats. However, exploring the scholarship and creating a conceptual framework was essential. The Handbook portion of the Doctoral Project grew from what I learned from the research. In the Handbook, I explore the Hurried Woman syndrome, spiritual dehydration, and the broken work-rest cycle. I explore retreats as a solution and my life as a hurried, rushed, not-so-superwoman. I explain the missional framework for The Watering Place™: worship, activation, transformation, encounter, and restoration. Finally, because The Watering Place™ centers the benefit of holding space, I have multiple chapters explaining the importance of holding space and how holding space can occur in different modalities. Specifically, for this study portion, I looked at music and art as space creators and holders. I am excited to explore other modalities as well after graduation.

There is a natural feedback loop between stakeholders/participants and my ministry. Satisfaction is observable to a certain degree through body language, in-session engagement, and the number of people who return for other sessions. However, I will collect data on the efficacy of the sessions in which women participate.

## Reflection

Reflecting on my doctoral journey, I admit that I was still formulating the actual "project" until the delivery phase. I just could not get a clear image of what I wanted to "create." As mentioned earlier, I have wanted to open a retreat center for many years. The design and discovery phases revealed aspects that were either out of my wheelhouse or did not ignite my passion. I am grateful that Portland Seminary's processes helped clarify my love for gathering women and discovering ways to bring passion and need together for a workable solution.

I was fortunate to not only be on a sabbatical from the university in the fall semester but was able to link my sabbatical project to the doctoral project. As a result, I had the resources to travel to southern California and Maryland to hold several mini-retreats and think tanks with stakeholders from high school through retired women. These gatherings were revelatory. I realized that if I am going to work with younger women, there is significantly more primary research in which I need to engage. Someone must teach this population to build more margin into their schedules. However, working with women as young as high school requires more caution. For now, that is not my target market. I learned that I need to be conscious of differences. One session had a limited English speaker in attendance. I felt her discomfort most of the evening. In at least two others, some women identified as LGBTQ+ or non-Christian. Unless I want to limit my impact, and I do not, I need to be conscious of the normative assumptions that may be at play. To do so effectively will require more

education and training. The overarching revelation was that women are often so busy they do not even realize just how much they need space to gather, reflect, and simply 'be.' More than one woman said she nearly begged off from attending and was so glad she had not.

No single way exists to solve the issues resulting from lives lived on overload. This revelation removed self-imposed pressure to create the "perfect" project. It helped me identify my lane, get in it, and stay focused on this solution. Offering retreats is not a novel idea. Women's ministries and special interest groups hold retreats that thousands of women attend regularly. I love attending retreats myself. However, I often find the schedules so packed with "good" things to do that there is very little time to reflect. Many of these gatherings are more like conferences than functional retreats. They offer door prizes, bags filled with goodies, games, fashion shows, self-help workshops, and multiple speakers. There is certainly value in these types of gatherings, and they meet a need. As detailed in my Handbook, they are also often exclusionary in that many of the people who most *need* to attend *cannot* because of the associated costs of travel, participation, childcare, and taking time off work and away from other obligations. There is a place for these retreats to meet some women's needs. It is simply not the place I want to provide. Throughout the doctoral process, my goal of hosting small gatherings that are not over-planned was continually reaffirmed and is the essence of my ministry and The Watering Place™ concept.

During our doctoral studies, my marriage of 40 years unraveled, and within a year, we divorced. For a person who spent a significant portion of my ministry leading the church's marriage ministry and doing pre-marital and marriage coaching, this was devastating on levels beyond the personal. Being in the doctoral program with specific deadlines and crafted processes, as well as having supportive colleagues, gave me a safe container in which to put my emotions. Though my role was as facilitator and holder of space for others, holding workshops and mini-retreats ministered to me as I saw others blessed.

## Looking Forward

- Neither part of *The Watering Place™: Creating Space for Spiritually Dehydrated and Hurried Women* is intended to be a finished document. The Handbook sets the foundational context for the Watering Place Portfolio. At the same time, more avenues remain to be researched. For example, I acknowledge the need to be more knowledgeable about and intentional in working with women who do not identify as Christian, who may be non-English speakers, or who identify as LGBTQIA+. As I mention below, the resources collected in the Portfolio section of the Doctoral Project are quite diverse already and will become even more so as I attend to this growth area.
- I concentrated on music and art for holding space in this iteration, so I need to do more research in dance, drama, storytelling, writing, and meditation since I intend to use every modality at my disposal in this work.
- I have gathered a wealth of materials and resources to be used in crafting watering sessions in the Portfolio section of the project. These include prompts, poems, song lyrics, coloring pages, journals, paintings, memes, and various written resources. Not only will I continue to accrue materials, but I will also develop and test others, always keeping the missional

framework and centering holding space for self and others at the forefront. Starting in March this year, I will pilot a weekly home group for women using existing materials and creating others. From a business perspective, I intend to secure a trademark for The Watering Place™ concept and develop partnerships to take the project beyond my ministry's sphere of influence and into the larger community.

## Conclusion

The entire doctoral process has been a joy. COVID-19 significantly altered my cohort's experience, notably having to hold our first advance over zoom and not getting to go to England. The latter was a huge disappointment which we continue to discuss. Forming a community within the cohort, with our Project Faculty, and even with Len Sweet took intentionality since we did not have the privilege of allowing it to happen organically. Though perhaps I should not have been, I was surprised to discover I was the elder in my cohort. A month before graduation, I will celebrate my 65th birthday. Though I have been an education professional all my career, I completed my last master's degree in 2009 and my Ph.D. in 1986. I am foremost a practitioner and secondarily a print scholar in my professional world. So much seems to have changed in this arena. At times I found myself intimidated by the sheer brilliance of my younger peers. Leonard Sweet challenged us with reading lists that took me well out of my comfort zone or personal preference. For this, I am grateful. I often felt like the "most uneducated educated" person alive. Yet, I persevered and am, thus, quite proud to be able to tell everyone that you can, in fact, teach an old(ish) dog new tricks. I have so much more depth and wisdom from which to draw as I minister to women in the way God has called me.

# Doctoral Project

# Presentation of Project

**Opening Statement:** *The Watering Place™: Creating Space for Spiritually Dehydrated and Hurried Women was* developed and created as a solution to the Need/Problem/Opportunity (NPO): *In a speedy, frenzied world, women need [a] space to pursue healing, spiritual connection, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves*.

**Brief Introduction:** The Doctoral Project, *The Watering Place: Creating Space for Spiritually Dehydrated and Hurried Women***,** has two parts. Part One is a research-informed Handbook that provides the foundational knowledge for Doxology Ministries International's desire to be part of the solution. The Handbook explores the impact issues such as The Hurried Woman Syndrome and spiritual dehydration has on women's well-being. It explains the importance of creating and holding physically, spiritually, and emotionally safe spaces for oneself and others. It also explores the ability of various modalities, specifically music and art, to construct sacred space. Part Two is the construction of a perpetual digital portfolio of resources we will use to create "watering sessions" for women's retreats and workshops that address the NPO and meet the mission.

**Introducing The Project:**

The Project opens with a watercolor, *The SuperWoman*. I painted it to depict the reality of many women's day-to-day existence. *The SuperWoman* not only wears a cape. She also wears mom, chef, keeper-of-the-schedule, employee, fixer-of-all-things/people-broken, house-keeper, dog-walker, manager, and must-keep-my-weight-in-check like badges of honor – without the recognition. The clock reminds her to hurry, rush, press, and ignore her thirst.

**Part One – Section One** looks at the need or problem represented in the NPO through the lens of overburdened schedules, and internal and external expectations that drive women. Frantic schedules and overextension make women more susceptible to health problems and spiritual dehydration. I discuss the work-rest cycle modeled by God in the creation narrative and through Jesus' life in the New Testament, a cycle broken in a society that values production over rest. Section One also introduces retreats as a possible solution.

**Part One - Section Two** opens with another watercolor entitled *Rest Is Beautiful*. This painting is a visual reminder of God's call to his daughters. The reclining woman rests, undisturbed and at peace, on a bed of colorfully dressed flowers. The hymn *I Surrender All* provides the backdrop for the painting, "All to Jesus I surrender; all to Him I freely give. I will ever love and trust Him in His presence daily live. I surrender all. I surrender all. All to Thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all."[1] This section explains The Watering Place™ concept and missional framework. It further explores

[1] Lyrics by Judson W. Van De Venter. Music by Winfield S. Weeden.

holding space as a critical component in responding to the NPO. For this stage of the Doctoral Project, I investigated two modalities, music and art, as creators and holders of space. I also highlight the power of stories when women gather in summaries from mini-retreats held during the fall.

**Part Two** of the Project is The Watering Place™ Portfolio. There are currently 207 pages in the Portfolio, not including resources collected in folders on Pinterest or the wealth of articles collected during the research process. Resources are organized into several categories: prompts, poems, song lyrics, memes, paintings, spiritual practices, coloring pages, journals, and written resources. There are also complete watering sessions or focal points for mini-retreats. I have included representative pages in each of the aforementioned categories. The ultimate and ongoing goal is to build a more extensive repertoire of watering sessions using resources from the Portfolio. Because this work is perpetual with a built-in assessment loop, as sessions are utilized, they will either be updated with necessary changes, archived, or remain as-is in the active Portfolio.

The Portfolio contains two complete Seven-day ART Journals that focus on three of the five parts of The Watering Place™ Missional Schema: Activation, Restoration, and Transformation. I am showcasing *Reflections on Psalm 126: From Timeout to Liberty*. The journal utilizes scripture, song lyrics with recording URLs, daily readings, coloring pages, paintings, and prompts to guide users through the study. These are just the first two in the planned ART Journal series.

Currently, I have collected twelve pages of prompts and seven pages of poems that will be useful for conversation or journaling. I invited input from family, students, and social media contacts for secular songs that people found inspirational. I assembled nearly 150 songs, some of which I used in the ART Journal and Watering Sessions. I deliberately requested songs outside of those commonly associated with the church to understand better what people listen to and what kinds of music they find impactful. This Project will continue. As a developing semiotician, I am learning the value of understanding cultural icons and images. Thus, the Portfolio contains memes, paintings, coloring pages, and mandalas.

I included several examples of Watering Sessions. Because learning to rest or stepping away from busyness often requires a paradigm shift, I have been playing with language for the Watering Sessions. I expect these to evolve as I test the Watering Place concept outlined in the Project Launch Plan. At this point, I am using the following language to characterize various segments in Watering Sessions.

- **Watering Sessions:** The term "activities" as a descriptor for mini-retreats is often associated with working or doing. I chose Watering Sessions to conjure the image of refreshing and hydration for the thirsty or dehydrated.
- **Holding Space:** Instead of the word discussions, I use holding space. My goal is two-fold. First, it is a constant reminder that when we share, another must choose to sit with us in that

space. It is a reciprocal process. Second, as a minister and educator, I always look for ways to help people grow. Holding space does not come naturally; people must learn to listen without attempting to fix or guide, an explicit value expressed in the Seven Foundational Beliefs posted in the Portfolio. As we go through Watering Sessions, I can help people learn to give others, and themselves, the precious gift of holding space.

- **Watering:** Instead of using the word reflect, I chose watering. In the same way that watering nourishes plants and enables them to grow, sitting with ideas, prayers, scripture, images, or our images provides nourishment to people.

- **Wading In:** Wading In is an invitation to go deeper into the things participants are learning, into communion with God, or new revelations.

- **Soaking:** These are extended periods spent in worship, one of the five parts of the missional schema.

# Assessment

In the 950 Doctoral Project Delivery Plan, I established three primary factors for determining the success of my project:

1. The project's *viability as a tool* for individual and small groups of women's ability to "pursue healing, spiritual connection, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves" [NPO Statement] within my local context.
    a. I believe I successfully met this factor, especially with groups. I did not test the viability of individuals because my primary focus is on small groups. In retrospect, I should have omitted individuals in this project stage. Indeed, I want people to take anything they learn or experience in gatherings to their homes to implement into their daily lives and share with others.
    b. Researching for the Handbook, Part One, allowed me to clarify issues I intuitively believed to be negatively impacting women, busyness chief among them. Research also provided the impetus to look more closely at retreats as a solution. I learned so much and often found myself going down interesting rabbit trails, seeking a solution. One such tributary was in the study of place versus space. After more than two weeks of digging deep, I realized that an understanding of holding space was much more critical to my work. In fact, holding space became a central tenet of The Watering Place™ Project. See Chapter 7 in the project.
    c. During this academic year, I tested small-group, short-term retreats with several groups, from high school to senior women, using both traditionally Christian resources and secular resources. Last summer, while teaching in Barcelona, Spain, I presented a workshop with students from my class. The feedback from all was very positive.

2. The project's *adaptability* as a tool I will be able to use in multiple settings, such as university Women's Centers or Campus Ministries in addition to churches in other parts of the country.

    a. I believe the project has a high degree of flexibility and adaptability. Of all the groups I worked with in the process, only two were explicitly Christian, though all participants knew I was Christian and an ordained minister. In some groups, most notably the high school group and one of the prototype retreats, I was careful to design the workshop and present materials, so it did not appear that I was proselytizing. In Part Two, The Portfolio, I have amassed an extensive collection of resources, some of it explicitly Christian, some implicitly Christian, and many that would be considered secular. I am confident in my ability to shape workshops and retreats for women in most environments using all I have learned from the research, the materials in the Portfolio, and the gifts and calling God has placed on my life.

   b. At the same time, I discovered a few blind spots for which I will need more preparation. There are two notable examples. First, I realized that if the goal is to be a resource for all women, I must be cognizant that there may be people in attendance who do not identify with or are comfortable in a fundamentally heteronormative environment. Second, in one workshop, I had a limited English speaker for whom I was unprepared. I am not sure how, or even if, I will be able to overcome this situation in the future, but it is worthy of more study and consultation.

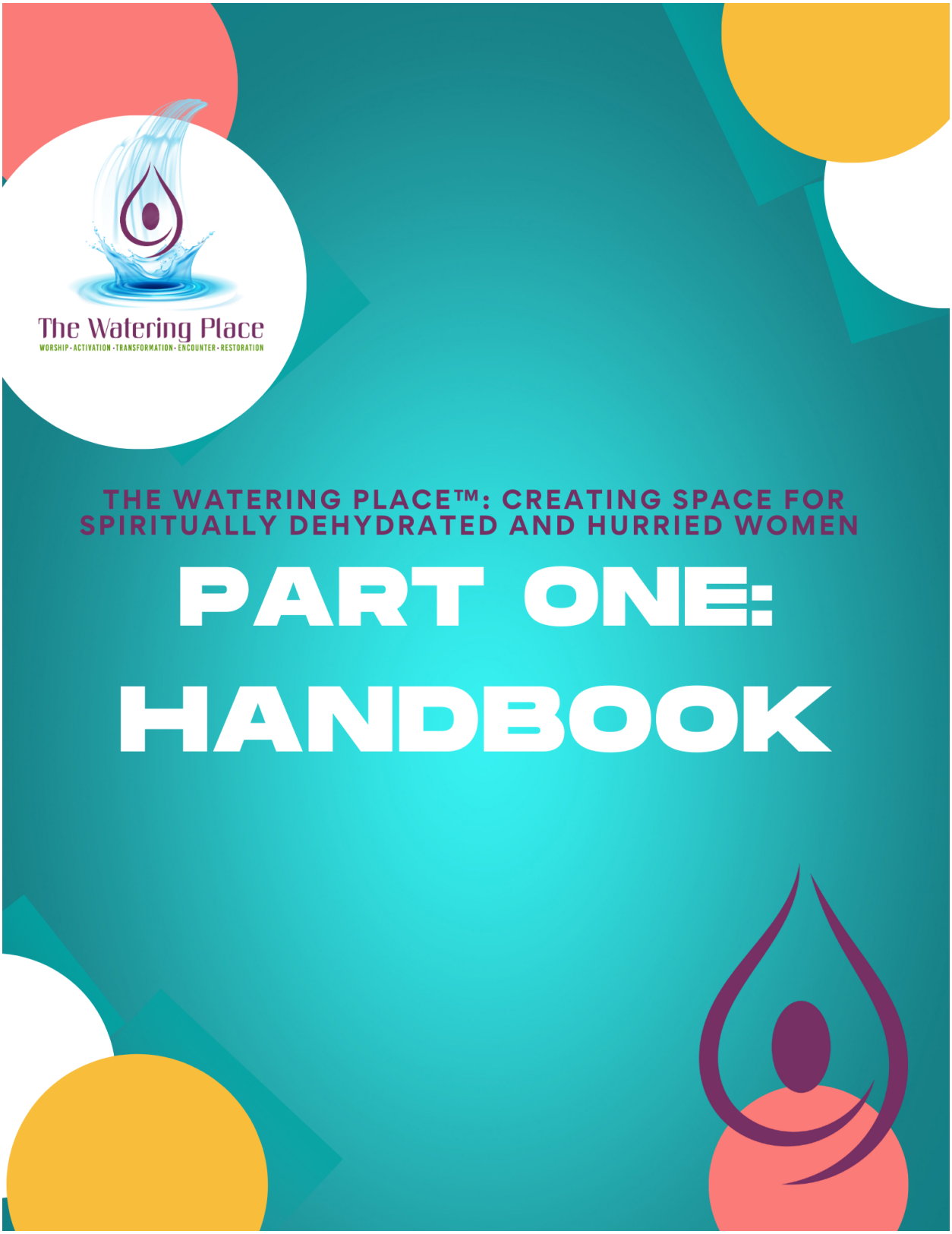
3. The project's *feasibility* as foundational materials for the launch of The Watering Place, a retreat resource for regular, ongoing ministry to women by my 501c3, Doxology Ministries International, Inc. (target date 2025-26)

   a. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity and time in the doctoral program to go deeper into a subject for which I have so much passion but not nearly as much knowledge as I may have once imagined. When I started the project, and frankly even as recently as last semester, I thought in terms of launching a physical location. I previously mentioned the amount of time spent discerning literature about space and place. In one of our morning conversations with Len Sweet, I asked about the feasibility of planting a church in a COVID era. I tucked away Len's comment that brick-and-mortar might not be the best goal in post-pandemic North America. Yet, though I rejected the idea of creating a business plan for a full-service retreat center, I continued to think of The Watering Place as a physical location. Len's words returned to me as I contemplated just what, if not a building, was the Watering Place. Considering that conversation and many others we had on those Monday mornings, and I finally received the revelation. The Watering Place™ is a concept that can be brought to life in any location, from my home, a library, garden, church, or if the need should ever arise, a room on Zoom. Doxology Ministries International has not eliminated the idea of launching a physical location in the future. However, we are more interested in fine-tuning the concept, refining the processes, collecting the best, most appropriate resources, and building a network where we can work. We are a small ministry and are unprepared at this juncture for the expense and stress of owning a facility. I believe the DMin Project positions Doxology Ministries well to make a difference in women's lives, starting with our local context.

I identified four key performance indicators:

1. Engagement of stakeholders
2. Quality content in Portfolio materials
3. Manageable costs to implement Portfolio activities
4. High potentiality of impact on end users' sense of well-being

Though I am optimistic that these will be a reality, numbers three and four require additional assessment. People have been very engaged in each session I have held, and Portfolio materials represent some of the best thinkers. At the same time, either Doxology Ministries International or I have covered the associated costs of retreats. There have been no costs to participants. The hosts purchased or prepared meals for participants when they allowed me to have events in their homes, as in Maryland and California. While the goal is to keep costs manageable, there *will* be costs; retreats are not free. Future research must include funding options. Likewise, discovering the impact on end users' well-being is a long-term goal and is not assessable at this juncture of the project.




PART ONE: THE HANDBOOK

# Part One - Section 1: The Problem

Chapter 1 ..... Rushing, Hurried, Superwoman

Chapter 2 ..... Spiritual Dehydration

Chapter 3 ..... The Work-Rest Cycle

Chapter 4 ..... Confessions of A Healing-In-Progress, Hurried, Rushing, Not-So-Superwoman

Chapter 5 ..... Toward A Potential Solution: Retreats

# Part One - Section 2: Creating Space

Chapter 6 ..... The DMI Solution

Chapter 7 ..... Holding Space

Chapter 8 ..... Stories From Space

Chapter 9 ..... Encountering God Through Music: My Story

Chapter 10 ..... Holding Space Through Art and Music

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# PART TWO: THE WATERING PLACE ™ PORTFOLIO

About The Watering Place Portfolio

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Seven Foundational Beliefs

Showcased Watering Session Pages

**FIGURE 1. *THE SUPERWOMAN.***

Original watercolor by Donna M. Cox, November 2022, Dayton, Ohio.

# CHAPTER 1
# Rushing, Hurried, Superwoman

Superwoman. Everyone has heard of her. You might *be* her, with so many plates, pets, people, and projects swirling around that you barely dare to move for fear they will all come crashing down. Peggie Lee sang about her in the title song of her 1963 LP, "I'm A Woman."[2] Revlon borrowed it for the 1978 Enjoli Perfume commercial, applauding woman's ability to "bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and never let you forget you're a man." Dressed in a slinky, sexy dress and high heel pumps, the shero proclaimed, "I can work till 5 o'clock, come home and read you tickety-tock. And if it's lovin' you want, I can kiss you and give you the shivering fits."[3] Stevie Wonder complained about her not being there when he needed her in his song, "Superwoman (Where Were You?)."[4] Despite living in an unprecedented era with a wealth of services claiming to make life easier and more convenient, women are worn out. Though smartphones, watches, tablets, and laptops put the world at her fingertips, they also blur the lines between work, home, and play; Superwoman is never off-duty. She rarely gets to be Kristin Wells.[5] The challenges and expectations of a too-fast, too-cluttered, too-everything world make it difficult to be any other way. Marjorie Hansen Shaevitz coined the term for what the artists talked about and what many women experience in her book, *The Superwoman Syndrome: For Women Trying To Do It All – How To Decide What's Important In Your Life and Do It Well* (1984).[6] Superwoman Syndrome occurs when women believe the fallacy that it is possible to "do it all" with perfection. They stretch themselves trying to make it happen without fully recognizing or understanding the personal costs of doing so.

In 2005, Dr. Brent Bost, obstetrician-gynecologist, identified a disorder, Hurried Woman Syndrome. It significantly affects American women, impacting over thirty million women, or one out of four, between the ages of 25-55 in the United States. In his book *The Hurried Woman: Conquer Fatigue, Achieve Successful Lifelong Weight Management, and Rekindle the Fire in Your Relationships,* Bost detailed a seven-step program to help women beat fatigue, get a handle on their weight, and revitalize passion in their relationships. He identified the stress from attempting to manage home, church/community activities, work, and family members' needs and schedules as the single most

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[2] *I'm a Woman,* track #6 on Peggy Lee, *I'm a* Woman, Capitol Records, 1962, Vinyl.

[3] Enjoli, "Cause I'm A Woman," advertisement aired in 1978.

[4] "Superwoman", track #2 on Stevie Wonder, *Music of My Mind*, 1972, Tamla Records.

[5] Kristen Wells first appeared in the 1981 novel, *Superman: Miracle Monday*, by Elliot Maggin as one of the secret identities of Superwoman.

[6] Marjorie Hansen Shaevitz, *The Superwoman Syndrome: For Women Trying To Do It All – How To Decide What's Important In Your Life and Do It Well* (New York: Random House, 1984).

significant complaint of women suffering from Hurried Woman Syndrome. The syndrome is characterized by moodiness, sleep problems, fatigue, weight gain, and low libido. Normalizing busy, hectic schedules and cluttered lifestyles is dangerous. Left unattended, Hurried Woman Syndrome can have long-term and far-reaching consequences for women and those in their care.[7] In nutritional biochemist Libby Weaver's book, *The Rushing Woman Syndrome: The Impact of a Never-Ending To-Do List and How to Stay Healthy in Today's Busy World*, she focused on the biochemical effects rushing and the stress constantly being wound up has on the body's systems.[8] According to Weaver, Rushing Woman Syndrome is essentially Sympathetic Nervous Dominance resulting from an imbalanced nervous system. It occurs when the Sympathetic Nervous System ("fight or flight" response) overpowers the Parasympathetic Nervous System ("rest, digest, repair, and reproduce" response). Like Hurried Woman Syndrome, rushing causes several stress-related issues, including fatigue, moodiness, anxiety, forgetfulness, weight gain, trouble sleeping, feelings of guilt, and low self-esteem. Weaver wrote the book in response to significant shifts in women's health and behavior she observed in her practice.

> Never before in my work had I witnessed so many females in a rush to do everything and be all things to all people. Never before had I seen the extent of reproductive system and sex hormone challenges that I was seeing. Women were wired. Many of them were tired too. Tired yet wired. And this relentless urgency, this perception that there was not enough time, combined with a to-do list that was never all crossed off was having such significant health consequences for women that I had to write about it. I didn't want these amazing mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, and colleagues to compromise the quality of their lives in order to live up to this perceived urgency.[9]

Whether you call it Superwoman, Hurried Woman, or Rushing Woman Syndrome, by any name, the results are the same: significant physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional stress. The condition makes no distinction between women in the marketplace and stay-at-home mothers. It is an equal opportunity offender. The cycle of busyness, hurrying, and rushing is a harmful, burdensome lifestyle that leaves little room for the joys of life: meaningful conversation, healthy meals, play,

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[7] Brent Bost, *The Hurried Woman: Conquer Fatigue, Achieve Successful Lifelong Weight Management, and Rekindle the Fire in Your Relationships,* (New York: Vantage Press, 2001), http://hurriedwoman.com/syndrome.html.

[8] Libby Weaver, *The Rushing Woman Syndrome: The Impact of a Never-Ending To-Do List and How to Stay Healthy in Today's Busy World* (Carlsbad: Hay House, 2017).

[9] Libby Weaver, "The Science and Impact of Rushing", Dr. Libby - Internationally Acclaimed Nutritional Biochemist, Author & Speaker, June 18, 2019, https://www.drlibby.com/stress/science-impact-rushing/.

hobbies, peace, or spiritual vitality. As life moves faster, women feel compelled to do more. Lives are not simply overloaded; they are lived in overdrive. Rarely in the moment, women tend to live ten minutes, two hours, or even as far as a week into the future. Judith Duerk, in *A Circle of Stones: Woman's Journey To Herself*, explains the toll fatigue exacts on women's bodies and souls, to the point that some women are relieved to contract a horrendous disease so they can, without guilt, get the rest they so desperately need.[10] Wayne Muller says this: "If we do not allow for a rhythm of rest in our overly busy lives, illness becomes our Sabbath - our pneumonia, our cancer, our heart attack, our accidents create Sabbath for us."[11] Yet, these symptoms can be, and often are, easily ignored. Without surcease, stress leads to severe health complications such as heart disease, high blood pressure, and a compromised autoimmune system.[12]

Similarly, the brain is simply not designed to process over-loaded schedules healthily. According to researchers, overloaded schedules and multitasking strengthen the task or goal-oriented network in the brain and leave the introspective daydreaming network to atrophy. The task-oriented network keeps a person vigilant and edgy. That is its purpose. However, when it is in overdrive, it constantly floods the body with cortisol, adrenaline, and norepinephrine, the stress hormones. When this network is overstimulated, it causes the super-rushing woman to crave the feelings stress produces. Eventually, she becomes inured to the impact, and the cycle of rushing and stress becomes her new normal. The net result is less comfort with idle time, leaving women unaware of the body's cries for help. The task-oriented network was designed to be balanced by the brain's introspective, calming, naturally meditative network.[13]

For African American women, Hurried Woman Syndrome adds another layer of complication. According to psychiatrist Reba Peoples,

> We live in a culture that values productivity, so we're measured by that capacity to produce," Peoples said. "But for Black people, that idea goes even deeper because our [enslaved] ancestors were literally valued based on their capacity to produce labor. Not working up to capacity could mean beatings, or you could be sold off and

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[10] Penelope Mark-Stewart, "On Women and Sabbath Rest," *The Living Pulpit*, (April-June 1998), 26-27. http://library.mibckerala.org/lms_frame/eBook/pauline%20chro/sabth/sabbath%201.pdf

[11] Wayne Muller. *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives* (New York: Bantam, 2000)20.

[12] Sara Berry, "Don't Dismiss Rushing Woman's Syndrome", Sydney Morning Herald, June 18, 2014, https://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/dont-dismiss-rushing-womans-syndrome-20140617-zsaqb.html

[13] Richard Morgan, "The Introspective Parts of Our Brains Are Getting Out of Shape," Vice, December 20, 2018, https://www.vice.com/en/article/xwjp53/if-youre-always-rushing-to-get-things-done-you-might-have-hurry-sickness

> separated from your family. So it was dangerous to rest, and we've had that encoded into our DNA.[14]

Ralinda Watts, in her essay, "For Black Women Rest Is an Act of Resistance and Radical Self-Love," expresses it this way. She writes, "Our ancestors have taught us to endure. By watching our grandmothers and mothers, we learned to 'keep on keeping on,' despite the toll on one's physical and mental well-being."[15] Black women who participated in multiple portions of the Doctor of Ministry NPO project intuitively affirmed from their personal experiences what Watts articulates.

In 2021, the world watched and responded negatively when two elite athletes, both Black women, shocked the world of sports by taking themselves out of highly competitive and visible sporting events. Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open, and Simone Biles withdrew from the Olympic Games in Tokyo. Both women cited, on world stages, mental health issues as the fundamental concern and withdrawal to rest and refocus as the best remedy for them. Despite the wealth of evidence connecting overwork with declining mental and physical health, the world continues to value and reward productivity. Though many applauded Osaka and Biles for prioritizing their mental health, others strongly expressed disappointment. For the latter, performance, not health, was the more important goal. Modern women live in this unresolved tension, compelled from within and without to perform while craving the rest bodily systems need to function well. It takes intentionality and courage to go against the grain of busyness.

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[14] Amanda Miller Littlejohn, "Black Professional Women Are Tired", Washington Post, accessed August 20, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/08/20/black-women-professionals-rest/

[15] Ralinda Watts, "For Black Women, Rest Is an Act of Resistance and Radical Self-Love", PopSugar, accessed January 26, 2021, https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/why-rest-is-act-resistance-for-black-women-48071653

# CHAPTER 2
# Spiritual Dehydration

*Rarely does the body suffer without transmitting the sickness to its soul, for it is rare for the soul to suffer without the body suffering. Thus, you are doctors not only of bodies but also of souls of which are impossible to heal if you do not look after your own soul.*[16]
*(Hippocrates)*

In 1996 the Coca-Cola Corporation, looking for a new image for its popular drink, Sprite, hired advertising executive Donald Rifkin. Within a week, Rifkin, drawing from a speech by former President Ronald Reagon and tapping into Hip Hop culture, created the tagline for Sprite that would link the two for nearly 30 years, "Obey Your Thirst." I am sure Rifkin had no idea he was advertising not just a physical truth but a significant spiritual truth when he wrote, "Image is nothing. Thirst is everything. Obey your thirst." Thirst, in all its guises, is a powerful clue to a need that must be addressed.

Water is the primary fluid in the body and plays a crucial role in all the body's systems; virtually all body functions require an adequate and continual water supply. Thirst is the body's first line of defense against dehydration but only occurs after dehydration has already begun. In other words, by the time a person feels thirsty, they are already in a state of dehydration. Even mild dehydration can impair physiological and performance responses. According to many studies, the possible effects of chronic mild dehydration include diminished mental and physical performance, increased risk of kidney stones, urinary tract cancers, breast cancer, and childhood obesity. When unchecked, dehydration can lead to increased physical and mental disorders and even death.[17] Emerging research shows that dehydration may increase the risk of depression, anxiety, and stress. Furthermore, people who suffer from these conditions are likely to reduce their water intake. This chicken-and-egg scenario is highly problematic. [18]

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[16] Sotirios G. Antonopoulos, "My Thirsty Soul (MTS) – Soul," Manual Therapy System, n.d., https://mtscenter.gr/en/about/philosophy/my-thirsty-soul-mts-soul.

[17] Mayo Clinic, "Dehydration: Symptoms and Causes", Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 1998-2023, https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/dehydration/symptoms-causes/syc-20354086

[18] C.X. Muñoz et al., "Habitual total water intake and dimensions of mood in healthy young women", Appetite, May 8, 2015, accessed https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2015.05.002.

There is a parallel between how physical dehydration negatively impacts the physical body and how spiritual dehydration negatively impacts the spirit and soul. Made in the image of God, we are tripartite beings with a body, spirit, and soul, three interwoven, interdependent parts. (1 Thessalonians 5:23) Fr. Travis Du Priest describes this unique relationship in this way. "Created in "the image of God," we have within us a template of the divine: The same creative, coordinating Spirit which unifies God—Trinity of Father, Son, Holy Spirit—unifies us..."[19]

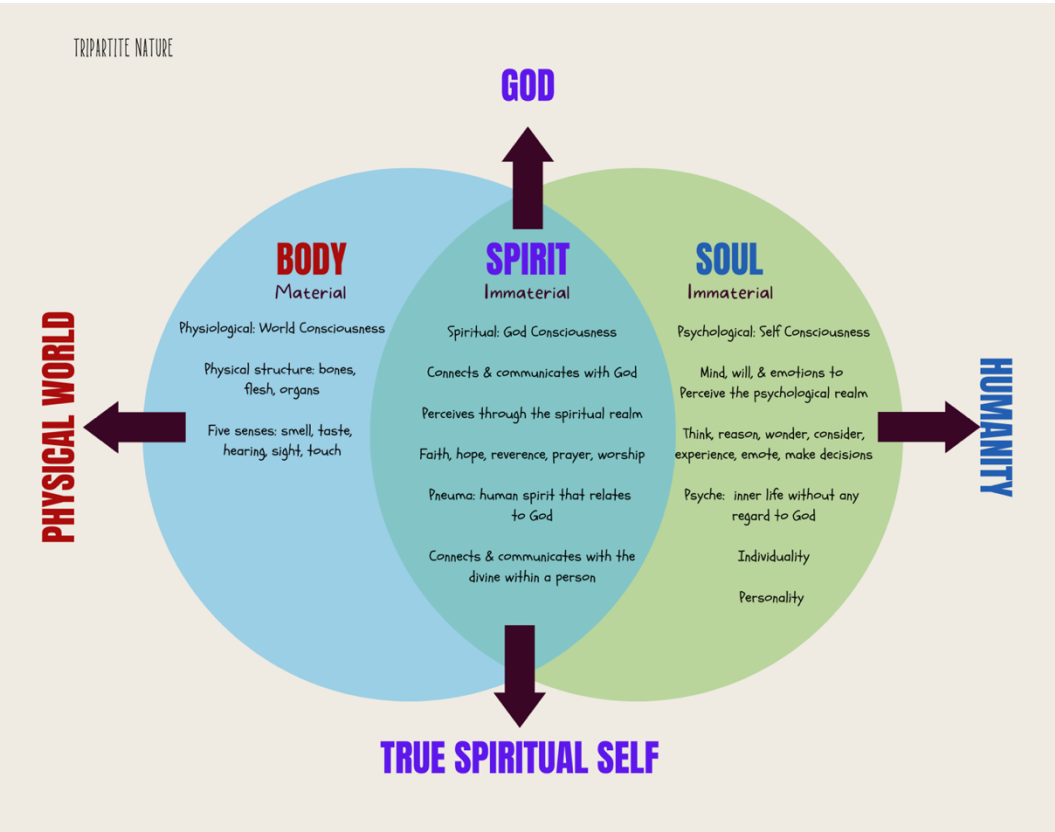


**FIGURE 2. *MANDORLA REPRESENTATION OF THE TRIPARTITE NATURE OF HUMAN BEINGS***

[19] Travis Du Priest, "Spirit: Inner Witness and Guardian of the Soul", *Anglican Theological Review*,83,1 (Summer 2001): 387-401.

The body is easily understood. We live in material bodies, an intricate system of bones, flesh, and organs susceptible to growth, reproduction, and decay. We experience the physical world through the five senses: touch, smell, sight, hearing, and taste. The soul and spirit are a bit more challenging to parse. Many argue that humans are bipartite beings; the body and the spirit/soul. However, using spirit and soul interchangeably diminishes the beauty and sophistication of the individual systems designed by God, who does make a distinction. Hebrews 4:12 explains that the living and active Word of God is "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Saint John of Damascus eloquently described the soul as "living matter, simple, bodiless, invisible by nature to the human eye, rational, mindful, shapeless while using the body as an organ and providing life and growth and feeling and birth; without having a mind within it has its own cleaner part (as the eye is to the body, so the mind is to the soul), self-sacrificing, intentional and energetic..."[20] The soul is the seat of the mind, will, and emotions, in which the personality is developed and expressed. We consider, wonder, and experience the world and others beyond the five senses in the soul. Through the soul, we think, reason, and make decisions. The soul is the essence of our humanity, expressing our desires, affections, and appetites.

The spirit is the deepest part of humanity. We engage, connect, and communicate with God through the spirit. The spirit prays, hopes, worships and exercises faith. Only in the spirit can we connect with the true essence of who we are as spiritual beings. It is our spirit that gives our lives meaning and purpose. The spirit enables us to love ourselves, other people, and God. In the spirit, we intuit right from wrong and develop a moral compass. In the words of Fr. Travis Du Priest, "Spirit coordinates, or 'narrates,' our inner lives, acting as inner witness and guardian." He further describes the spirit within, "Her 'language' is symbol and metaphor, and she communicates through dreams and daydreams, visions, and musings. Spirit is alive and well in our unconscious mind and dream life, sending up clues, in the 'language' of image and metaphor, about the status of our souls. She also oversees interior dialogue, allowing us to 'hear within' both our negative and often-inflated self-images and opinions of others."[21]

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[20] Joseph A. Gallegos, "The Church Fathers and the Immortality of the Soul", CatholicFidelity.com2001, https://www.catholicfidelity.com/the-church-fathers-and-the-immortality-of-the-soul-by-joe-gallegos/.

[21] Travis Du Priest, "Spirit: Inner Witness and Guardian of the Soul", Anglican Theological Review 83,3 (Summer 2001): 387-401.

**FIGURE 3. *MANDORLA REPRESENTATION OF THE TRIPARTITE AREAS OF HEALTH FOR HUMAN BEINGS***

Thirst and water are two of the most potent spiritual metaphors in all scripture for a reason. Just as dehydration impedes the body's ability to thrive, a comparable deficit occurs in the soul and spirit. David, the psalmist, expressed it this way, "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. (Psalm 42:1)." In Psalm 143:6, he sang, "I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land." When one dimension of our tripartite nature suffers, the entire being is affected. As we have seen, living a cluttered, overpacked life at hyper-speed can cause significant physical and emotional issues. A steady diet of hurrying impacts physical and emotional health, dehydrates the spirit, and makes the soul thirsty. Rushing leaves little time and even less energy to nurture one's spiritual development or to maintain a deep connection with the Divine. When the body is exhausted, and the soul is parched, the spirit dehydrates and shrivels. The essence of spiritual dehydration is an unhealthy cycle that results in overthinking, fruitless analyzing, trying to "figure it out," guilt, shame, and negativity.

## Table 1. Summary Characteristics of the Dehydrated Soul and Thirsty Spirit

| Dehydrated Soul | Thirsty Spirit |
|---|---|
| Personal worries about having or being enough | So emotionally spent that you are unable to give time or energy to yourself |
| Concern for the pain and suffering of others and feeling impotent to make a difference | Disquieted by forgetting or neglecting prayer, stillness, connection with self and God |
| Lack of physical, mental, and financial resources | A drought of divine truth |
| Myopic vision. See what's wrong without being able to imagine a different way | Sense of dissatisfaction with life |
| A cycle of just 'getting by' or 'just getting through' | |
| Multitasking with no end in sight, difficulty imagining doing one thing to its conclusion | |

*Note: Table 1 summarizes the fundamental distinctions between a dehydrated soul and thirsty spirit*

# CHAPTER 3
# The Broken Link: The Work-Rest Cycle

*"When we live without listening to the timing of things, when we live and work in twenty-four-hour shifts without rest – we are on war time, mobilized for battle. Yes, we are strong and capable people, we can work without stopping, faster and faster, electric lights making artificial day so the whole machine can labor without ceasing. But remember: No living thing lives like this. There are greater rhythms, seasons and hormonal cycles and sunsets and moonrises and great movements of seas and stars. We are part of the creation story, subject to all its laws and rhythms."*[22]
*(Wayne Muller)*

The remedy for spiritual dehydration and the Superwoman, Hurried, and Rushing Woman Syndromes is the reclamation of a life-sustaining cycle of work and rest. It is the only sustainable response to the perverted, life-draining spiral of busyness.

## Mary's & Martha's Story: Luke 10:38-42

Though this story occupies a mere five verses in the Lukan gospel, it continues to be the subject of much discussion and profound debate. Jesus, traveling with fellow workers, sought hospitality from friends in Bethany.[23] Luke introduced Martha, who greeted Jesus and welcomed [*hypodechomai*] him into her home as an honored guest.[24] The third character in the story is Mary, who Luke tells us, was seated at Jesus' feet, listening to His words. The comparison is immediately apparent; Mary is

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[22] Wayne Muller. Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives (New York: Bantam, 2000), 68-69.

1Luke does not mention the name of the town where Martha and Mary lived. We find the location of their home in John 11:1 which indicates that Lazarus, who was sick, was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

[24] Though there are dissenting voices, it seems clear from the literature, and from the pericope itself, that Martha is the homeowner. *Hypodechomai*, receive, welcome, entertain as a guest BAGD 844.

quietly seated [*parakathizō*], and Martha is distracted [*perispaō*] by much serving[*diakonian*].[25] Recognizing an inequity, Martha takes her concern, not to Mary, who interestingly remains silent in the story, but directly to Jesus, to whom she appeals as Lord [*Kyriou*].[26] "Don't You care that my sister is sitting while I do all the work? Tell her to get up and help me!" Rather than rebuking Mary as Martha hoped, Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

No matter how you read the pericope, Luke showcases a conflictual relation that creates a value system dichotomy; one sister exemplifies the values, and the other does not. Jesus' characterization of one choice as better, despite the softening of speaking Martha's name twice, fuels this comparison. Sweet, docile Mary sat at Jesus' feet, student-to-Rabbi, while anxious, mouthy, Superwoman Martha dashed from place to place, growing more frustrated by the moment until she finally spewed it all on the Lord. Across the interpretive spectrum and throughout the years, the story of Martha and Mary continues to call to women. For some, it is a tool to affirm a patriarchal system that keeps women in the proverbial kitchen. For others, it is a mirror through which women measure their effectiveness or spirituality. Irrespective of how you read and where you stand on the interpretative spectrum, there is a deeper meaning for women. It is not solely a question of whether a woman is Martha or Mary; She is both. Each day women must choose which part of themselves will show up.

In scripture, there are several well-known stories of the healing and transformation that occurred when women had encounters with Jesus: the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:27-34), Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-41); Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2) and many who remain unnamed. Yet, in the story of Martha and Mary, though Jesus heard Martha's complaint, there was no immediate resolution. It would be easy to assume no healing or transformation was needed. Or perhaps the assumption may be that the miracle would only occur when Martha checked her attitude, put her apron down, and sat at Jesus' feet. I think we miss an essential point. The miracle appears as we pull the lens farther out and view Martha and Mary as parts of the whole instead of as two people, one good and one bad.

Martha's cry is that of every working woman or stay-at-home Mom who feels pressed in and overwhelmed by the sheer number of things and people pulling on her time and energy. She needs

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[25] *Parakathizō*, sit beside BAGD 616; *perispaō*, be pulled or dragged away, become; be distracted, quite busy, overburdened BAGD 650; diakonian, service; ministry, mediation, assignment; service; engagement in preparations for a social event. Pamela Thimmes notes that in both Luke and John Martha is described as/associated with *diakonia*, a role that serves as a metaphor for community service and leadership in ministry (pg. 56). Martha was not necessarily overwhelmed with kitchen tasks and preparations for a meal. Pamela Thimmes, "Narrative and Rhetorical Conflict in Luke 10:38-42: A Cautionary Tale," *Proceedings* 20, 51-60. http://0eds.a.ebscohost.com.library.regent.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/

[26] *Kyriou*, owner; lord, master

to complain to someone because there are times when it is all just too much! Every woman feels like Martha sometimes. At the same time, every woman's heart longs for Mary's portion. As the Psalmist expressed it, her soul longs after God like the deer pants for streams of water. (Psalm 42:1) Mary needs time and space to sit at the feet of Jesus, no matter how much work there is to do.

Martha and Mary are metaphors for the cycle of work and rest established by God at creation and modeled by Jesus in the New Testament. Martha is called to set aside the labor and enjoy *sabbatismos*. Mary is invited to return from her time with Jesus to fruitful, necessary work, for *diakonian*. The prophet's words to Judah apply to Martha-Mary in the 21st century. God still calls her to come away, just as the lover calls his beloved to spend time with him.[27] God beckons Martha-Mary to a time of exquisite delight, a time so rich it feeds her soul. It fuels the body, nourishes the soul, and nurtures the spirit.

## Models for a Work-Rest Cycle

Though an eschatological reading is possible in the creation narratives, of particular interest to this study is God's deliberate separation of rest from work, a model of the necessary rhythm of life. From the opening of Genesis, we enter into God's creative work, what Leonard Sweet describes as God playing in a sandbox and making mudpies.[28] For six days, God creatively separated: light from darkness; day from night; water from dry land; water from water; sky, waters, and dirt; vegetation from soil; and light-bearers (stars, sun, moon) from darkness. Into this world of separated parts, God reached into dirt and water, formed man, and breathed into him the breath of life. From man, God separated a rib and created a woman. God's first act on behalf of the created humans was to initiate them into work, giving them the responsibility of tending the garden and ruling over the fish in the seas, birds in the sky, livestock, and every creature that moved on the earth. All of this, God proclaimed to be very good. (Genesis 1:31).

On the seventh day, God rested. This cycle is reiterated in Exodus 20:11, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day, he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy."[29] In this case, the word rested is much more than simply ceasing from activity. As Wayne Muller explains in *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, And Delight In Our Busy Lives*, God was refreshed. Here the word, 'refreshed,' *vaiynafesh,* literally means, and God exhaled. The creation of the world was like the life-quickening

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[27] Song of Solomon 2:10 (NLT).

[28] Leonard Sweet, *The Well-Played Life: Why Pleasing God Doesn't Have To Be Such Hard Work*, (Bonita Springs: Tyndale House Publishing, 2014), 121.

[29] Exodus 20:8–11 (NLT).

inhale; the Sabbath is the exhale. Thus, in the beginning, all creation moves with the rhythm of the inhale and the exhale. Without the Sabbath exhale, the life-giving inhale is impossible."[30] On the seventh day, God finished God's work by creating *menuha*, tranquility, serenity, peace, and repose, rest. "Until the Sabbath, creation was unfinished. Only after the birth of *menuha*, only with tranquility and rest, was the circle of creation made full and complete.[31]

Jesus also exemplified the work-rest, inhale-exhale, Martha-Mary cycle. An itinerant preacher, Jesus moved from place to place, healing, teaching, and mentoring those with whom He traveled and those He met along the way. Though His work was critical, Jesus intuitively understood the importance of separating periods of work with periods set aside for rest, prayer, and encounters with God. Interestingly, Jesus did not allow unhealed people or unmet needs to deter Him from taking time to retreat. At regular intervals, Jesus pulled away from people constantly demanding his time and gifts. If women are going to be all they were created to be, they must reconsider the quest to do all and prioritize rest. As David Allen, creator of the *Getting Things Done* productivity system said, "You can do anything, but not everything."[32] The harmful pattern of rest-less work is a vicious cycle that glorifies production, vilifies ease as a waste of valuable time, and is driven by the very people who work the most and rest the least.[33]

## Sabbath-Keeping

*There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;*
*for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works,*
*just as God did from his. Let us, therefore,*
*make every effort to enter that rest. Hebrews 4:9-11a*[34]

The practice of keeping the Sabbath is an essential tool in an era filled with crises and stress. Yet, as author Christopher Ringwald wrote, "The Sabbath remains the dessert most people leave on the

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[30] Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, (New York: Bantam Publishing, 1999), 36.

[31] Muller, 37.

[32] Samuel Rodenhizer. "Quotation Celebration", Quotation Celebration, May 17, 2019, n.d., https://quotationcelebration.wordpress.com/2019/05/17/you-can-do-anything-but-not-everything-david-allen/.

[33] Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World*, (Nashville: Oliver-Nelson, 1984), 166,174.

[34] Hebrews 4:9-11a (NIV).

table."[35] In *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man,* Abraham Joshua Heschel suggests that regularly refraining from work is a way of setting limits on behavior that is dangerous for both human welfare and the earth's welfare. He adds, "The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the climax of living." [36] Alice Walker expressed it this way, "Anybody can observe the Sabbath, but making it holy surely takes the rest of the week."[37]

Barbara Baker Speedling's paper, *Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time,* offers a valuable summary of the benefits of Sabbath-keeping among women. In it, she looks specifically at the transformative benefits for ten women ages 20 - 63 for whom Sabbath was not common practice. She concluded that Sabbath-keeping is a spiritual practice and can contribute to the well-being of individuals, communities, and the earth. Holistic health studies recognize the vital relationship between all aspects of well-being.[38] Her paper highlights current scholarship on psychological, social, physical, spiritual, cultural, and environmental health and identifies existing research gaps. Six themes emerged that applied to all participants in Speedling's study: "Sabbath-keeping enhanced self-awareness, improved self-care, enriched relationships, developed spirituality, positively affected the rest of a Sabbath-keeper's week, and Sabbath-keeping" practices and philosophies also evolved over time.[39]

Research verifies the undeniable connection between intentional and regular Sabbath observance and mental, physical, and emotional improvement. Most of the research focuses on communities with built-in social and religious mechanisms that support a lifestyle of regular Sabbath-keeping. Yet, the ways women 'celebrate' Sabbath Rest, even amongst religious groups, are typically much different than they are for men. In *On Women and Sabbath Rest*, Penelope Mark-Stuart describes how her mother's generation observed Sabbath, finding that, thirty years later, not much has changed. Mothers and grandmothers continue to be guardians of the Sabbath, sacrificing their rest to ensure others can participate. Though certain activities, such as cleaning, were discouraged or banned on the Sabbath, this did not necessarily result in rest for women and older daughters. Cooking special meals, dressing children for church services, entertaining visitors who often dropped by on Sunday afternoons, and caring for little ones could not be put on hold because it

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[35] Christopher Ringwald, *A Day Apart: How Jews, Christians, and Muslims Find Faith, Freedom, and Joy on the Sabbath*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), xi.

[36] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, (New York: Noonday Press,1951),18.

[37] Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 1983),351.

[38] Barbara Baker Speedling. "Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time," *Journal of Religion and Health*, (August 2019),1382.

[39] Speedling, 1389.

was the Sabbath. As a result, women were, and are likely to be, just as tired on Sunday as on any other day of the week.[40]

Though there are fewer research studies detailing the benefit for non-Sabbatarians, the writings of authors such as Parker Palmer, Richard Swenson, Barbara Holmes, and Lynn Baab highlight the power of reflection and rest. Sabbath-keeping and margin-making enhance self-awareness and positively impact and enrich relationships with self and others. They provide fertile ground for increasing spiritual health. The necessity for re-engaging, with intentionality, the work-rest cycle modeled by God in the creation narrative and Jesus throughout His public ministry is a largely corrupted cycle as the world spins ever faster. Reclaiming this cycle is critical for people of all ages and genders. However, this project specifically targets the needs of God's daughters, for whom rest is too often considered a luxury.

[40] Penelope Mark-Stewart, "On Women and Sabbath Rest", *The Living Pulpit*, (April-June 1998),26.

# CHAPTER 4
## Confessions Of a Healing-In-Progress, Hurried, Rushing, Not-So-Superwoman

As a woman in her 60s, I could be the poster child for Superwoman/Hurried/Rushing Woman Syndromes. I felt called to pursue the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree as a late-career, tenured college music professor. The DMin will be my fourth advanced degree. I have had a full career as a professional educator-performer. On the surface, there was no logical reason to pursue additional credentials. Yet, I'm the product of two groups that push me in ways that are not always apparent. First, I am a product of the academy. As an academic, we are encouraged, let us be honest, we are required to hone skills associated with "doing." Critical thinking, writing, researching, and teaching are all measurable touchstones along the path to tenure, promotion, and annual merit increases. Production fuels academia. Rarely are faculty encouraged to pursue "being" as necessary, in fact, vital to success.

I spent seven years as Chair of the Department of Music, the first African American to hold the position in the University's 150+ year history and one of few women chairs across the campus. I discovered during those seven years that women chairs struggled in ways their male counterparts did not; in fact, many ended up diagnosed with anxiety or depression and a prescription for valium. I was one of those. I went to the gastroenterologist because I was convinced acid reflux had returned with a vengeance. I expected a prescription for an antacid. Instead, she sat across from me and asked if I were under a lot of stress. To my way of thinking, my stress level was what it had always been – high. Pulling out her medical book so I could see for myself, she explained that I had *globus hystericus*, a symptom of anxiety. I left her office with two prescriptions: valium and another that appears to be the remedy for nearly anything that ails us: eat better, rest more, and exercise. I resigned from my position as Chair a year before my term would have ended. Yet, my schedule did not significantly change. Serving the local church: planning and hosting small group meetings, organizing, and executing special events, preparing for the worship event, meeting the needs of people under my care, and many other things added to the never-ending lists of 'do' and little time or energy for 'be.'

I am not only an academic but also an African American woman. According to the American Association of University Women of Blacks in higher education, African American women earn 64.1% of bachelor's degrees, 71.5% of master's degrees, and 65.9% of doctoral, medical, and dental degrees. Yet, they still represent only 21% of women who earn a bachelor's or associate

degree by 29.[41] This means many African American women earn degrees while simultaneously working and raising families. Touted as one of the most educated groups by race and gender, Black women live under the 'strong Black woman' and 'highly educated Black woman' tropes.

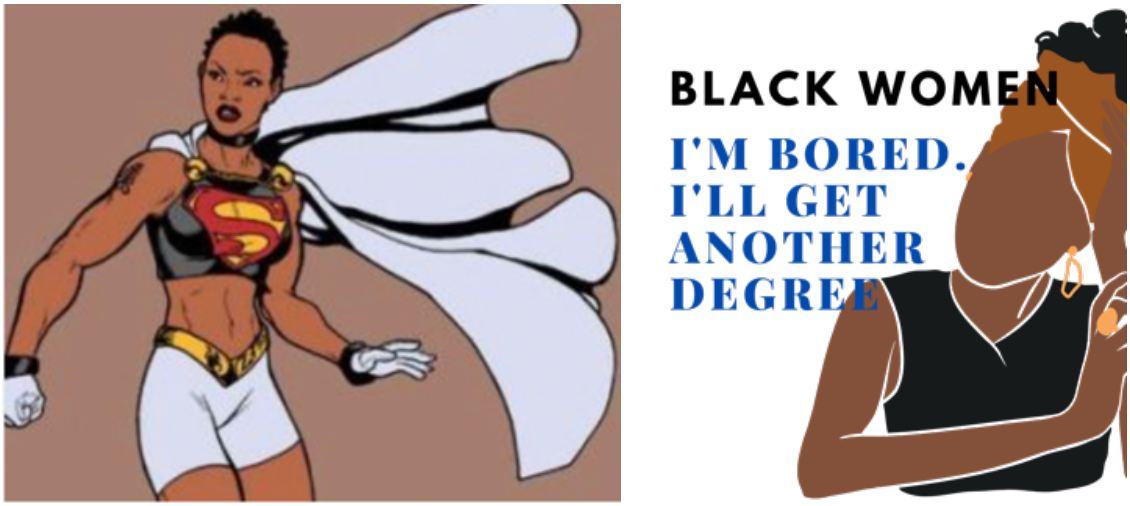


**FIGURE 4. TROPES ABOUT BLACK WOMEN**

The figure to the left depicts the 'Strong Black Woman' while the figure to the right depicts the notion that Black women get degrees for spurious reasons. Donna M. Cox created both images in Canva Pro.

Much more can be said about this, but it is out of the current scope of the study. The primary point is, as an academic in the 5.2% of all Black tenured faculty, and an African American woman, I am predisposed to the superwoman, hurried woman syndromes. And I, and my sisters, are tired.

I felt like a pitcher constantly pouring out with little time to be refilled. Out of this, I began to understand the need for rest and reflection, for sabbath time. Yet, putting that need at the top of my to-do list has been a constant struggle. My response to my heart's call was to create opportunities for others. I routinely opened my home for 'girl time.' The feedback was terrific. Recently, a young woman approached and, with tears in her eyes, told me how impactful one such gathering had been for her. It had, as she reported to me, literally saved her life. When she arrived at my home, she felt like an outcast. She was using drugs and alcohol, had given up on life getting better, and was seriously considering suicide. The night of that informal gathering, she felt like

[41] American Association of University Women, "Fast Facts: Women of Color in Higher Ed", American Association of University Women, n.d.,https://www.aauw.org/resources/article/fast-facts-woc-higher-ed/

someone was listening to her for the first time. She felt the presence of God anew and left a different person. For years she waited for an opportunity to share her story with me. Her testimony was a confirmation of the importance of this seminary project. More than fifteen years ago, I began offering the *Sabbath Rest Retreat: For Busy Women Who Need A Break*. These annual retreats averaged twelve to fifteen women and occasionally had upwards of twenty-five. Naturally, I began the retreat with a Superwoman goal. I planned to grow it into an annual event that reached hundreds, yea, even thousands of women. What I did not recognize going in was the absolute sweet spot of serving small groups of harried, hurried women. This concept of reaching smaller groups of women has exciting possibilities for the ministry I founded and lead, Doxology Ministries International, Inc. (DMI), a 501c3 charitable corporation. DMI is a nondenominational ministry whose mission "is to empower people to transform their lives and positively impact families and communities through the application of Biblical principles and practical wisdom. This is accomplished through various interrelated activities utilizing current and emerging technologies, printed materials, retreats, workshops, Bible studies, and ongoing worship services."[42]

**FIGURE 5. DOXOLOGY MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL INC. OFFICIAL LOGO**

Commissioned by Donna M. Cox.

[42] https://doxologyministriesinternational.wordpress.com/

# Chapter 5
# Toward A Potential Solution: Retreats

*I wonder why we too often live as though the life we are living is a trial run – some sort of dress rehearsal. Do we think that somewhere down the road we will get the chance to do it right? This is it! Today is it. You will not live this day again. Savor it.* [43]
*(Valorie Burton)*

## Churches Just Don't Understand

In an ideal world, every woman would live a balanced life, regularly alternating between periods of work and rest. Unfortunately, that is not our current reality. Until systems catch up, teaching women the importance of developing manageable habits of rest remains a priority. When I met with the Music Therapy Club at the University of Dayton, I talked to them about deciding, in their college years, to create balance in their lives. I explained that they would never have more time than they currently have. The attitude of "I will start when..." is a fallacy. Their looks clearly expressed their doubt about the validity of this suggestion. As music majors, they understood their schedules very well. The life of a music major is unlike that of most undergraduate students. Most music programs require many 0 and 1-credit courses in an attempt to stay within state-mandated credit hour guidelines. In these 0 and 1-credst courses, students do the work of 2-3 credit courses. It is not fair; it is just the way it is. As a result, while most college students taking 16 credits have an average of four classes, a music major taking 16 credits is likely to have seven to ten. Their schedules include ensembles and private lessons, which require significant preparation outside traditional class time. It is not surprising that the music therapy students did not believe my assertion. As I explained my reasoning, I could see understanding begin to dawn. The students were engaged in an intense four-year curriculum, including ongoing practica in various health fields. They would leave the University without the protection of a degree to serve a six-month *unpaid* internship to qualify for certification and to complete their undergraduate degree. Many would have to work part-time to pay living expenses during their internships. Afterward, they would spend significant time building a career. Perhaps they would get married and have children. Younger women must be taught that time will always be at a premium; there will never be a better time to develop healthier, more manageable, balanced lives.

Women around the globe, and since the beginning of time, have had a central role in society. Though often undervalued, underpaid, unseen, or uncelebrated, women have ensured the

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[43] Valorie Burton, *Happy Women Live Better*, (Eugene: Harvest House, 2013). Quoted on Good Reads "Happy Women Live Better Quotes", accessed , n.d., https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/23620708-happy-women-live-better

progress, stability, and development of nations. Women remain the primary caretakers of children and elders, family managers, lead educators, and either sole or co-supporters financially. Though the 21st-century male in different-sex households is more involved in labor in the home, women still do more. Most working mothers come home to a 'second' job at rates and time investments far exceeding working fathers. [44] According to the "Women in The Workplace Study 2020" (leanin.org and Mckinsey & Co.), working mothers' burnout is very real with many feeling like they are "always on." [45] The 2020 pandemic exacerbated the issue as lines between work and home were blurred, and expectations that employees would be available to employers around the clock increased.[46]

Though the lion's share of church leaders are men, women are often the primary financial supporters and workers who keep the church going. The latter is easy to understand; more women are in church than men. What this means for women is a more significant burden in carrying out the church's mission added to plates already filled to overflowing with little input into the church's operation.[47] Rather than a place of ease and refreshment, the demands of church involvement for women and their children contribute to busyness and stress. Church programming may be based on unrealistic assumptions about working parents' schedules or those of children's school and extracurricular activities. Sermons may not even speak to women's actual experiences. Participation in areas of ministry often feels like more of a hindrance than a help.[48] Church attendance appears to be one of the easiest things to take out of the schedule for a growing number of overwhelmed women. Large percentages of women who remain engaged in the life of the church have primary responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the family. According to the Barna group, throughout the

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[44] Sarah Jane Glynn. "An Unequal Division of Labor: How Equitable Workplace Policies Would Benefit Working Mothers" *Center for American Progress*, May 18, 2018, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/unequal-division-labor/.

[45] McKinsey & Company. "Women In The Workplace 2020" Lean In. n.d., https://wiw-report.s3.amazonaws.com/Women_in_the_Workplace_2020.pdf.

[46] Devin McGinley, "Work-life Balance Is Harder for Women In The Pandemic", Investment News, accessed November 20, 2020, https://www.investmentnews.com/work-life-balance-harder-women-pandemic-199727

[47] As reported in Eileen R. Campbell-Reed's report, *State of Clergywomen in the U.S.: A Statistical Update*, though there has not been a comprehensive study on U.S. women clergy for two decades, there have been measurable changes. For instance, in the United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist denominations, the numbers of men and women clergy is the about the same. Women still cannot be ordained by the Roman Catholic Church or the Southern Baptist Convention. Campbell-Reed states a significant difference in African American Baptist congregations where women comprise 50-75% of the congregations but are less than 10% pastors. In the African Methodist Episcopal Church approximately 26% of the pastors are women. https://eileencampbellreed.org/state-of-clergy/

[48] Barna, "The Powerful Influence of Moms in Christian Households," Barna, May 17, 2019, n.d., https://www.barna.com/research/moms-christians-households/

years, mothers continue to manage faith formation for the family and carry a large share of the logistical, emotional, and spiritual weight at home, [49]

It seems logical to expect the church to be more mindful of the need for healthy work-rest cycles, from leadership to congregants. Instead, the church is often complicit in the work-more, rest-less cycle with church calendars filled with activities. For Christians, this paradigm is antithetical to the call of Jesus, the sweet invitation to enter into rest for the soul. (Matthew 11:29b) Rather than being a demanding taskmaster, Jesus calls people into a relationship that is developed and nurtured during periods of rest. Ryan Burge notes the following in his article, "Behind the Steep Decline in Church Attendance Among Women:"

> While societal norms about parenting and professional responsibilities are glacially shifting toward more equality, raising kids is still seen by many to be "women's work." This puts many women in an untenable situation; data indicate that as women have become more involved in the workplace, their responsibilities at both home and church have not abated. The reality is that society is asking women to do it all, but each day still has the same 24 hours.[50]

## The Benefits of... and Problems with Retreats

There is a documented link between retreats and well-being or positive change. Research in environmental psychology, psychology, and geographical science has shown that retreat-like settings can be restorative (Rutledge and Raymon, 2001)[51] and therapeutic (Lea, 2008),[52] inducing positive development for participants. The Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University published the findings of a preliminary study on the neurophysiological effects of spiritual retreats on participants. According to the authors, this study represented the first of its kind that looked explicitly at the dopamine and serotonin levels of participants undergoing an intensive seven-day spiritual retreat. Though a preliminary study, researchers observed significant changes in several psychological and spiritual measures. Participants reported increased levels of spirituality, religiousness, and self-transcendence. [53] These studies and others document the

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[49] Barna. https://www.barna.com/research/moms-christians-households/

[50] Ryan Burge. "Behind the Steep Decline in Church Attendance Among Women," State of The Church 2020, accessed March 4, 2020, https://www.barna.com/changes-behind-the-scenes/.

[51] Dana N. Rutledge and Nancy J. Raymon, "Changes in well-being of women cancer survivors following a survivor weekend experience", *Oncology Nursing Forum,* 2001, 28(1), 55-91.

[51] Jennifer Lea, "Retreating to Nature: Rethinking 'Therapeutic Landscapes'", *Area 40,* 2008 ,1, 90-98.

[53] Andrew B. Newberg, et al, "Effect of a One-Week Spiritual Retreat on Dopamine and Serotonin Transporter Binding: A Preliminary Study", *Religion*, Brain & Behavior 8 (3): 265–78. 2018. doi:10.1080/2153599x.2016.1267035.

perceived benefits of immersive, multi-day spiritual retreats, practices associated with strong emotional responses, reduced stress, enhanced well-being, spiritual transformation experiences, and even result in life-changing consequences. (Falkenstrom, 2010, Hood, 1977; Kennedy, Abott, & Rosenberg, 2002).[54]

The opportunity to step away for an extended period may be one of the most effective strategies for reducing the number of women suffering from Hurried Woman Syndrome and spiritual dehydration. Multi-day retreats allow participants to explore new ways of being, gain fresh perspectives on life, and engage in experiences that nourish the soul.

> So many of us say, "If only I could take a break, if only I could get away." Here's your excuse: God told you to. We often criticize ourselves, friends, or colleagues for acting as if the world rested on our shoulders, for thinking we are God, that the world spins around us, and that we have to take care of everything ourselves. In fact, the person who stops once a week imitates a God who made the world and then ceased. (Christopher Ringwald)[55]

Multi-day retreats are the perfect introduction to, and extension of, Sabbath Rest. Because people are strung so tightly, it takes time to uncoil. Retreats challenge the productivity mindset and lead people to physical and emotional spaces where rest and reflection are possible. Similar to Sabbath-keeping, retreats invite individuals to notice the majestic work of God and to listen to and interrogate their thoughts and feelings. At the same time, they (re)orient their work within the purpose for which they were born. Retreats empower participants to develop internal resources while establishing connections with others on similar journeys. However, and this is an important point, though studies link overwork and mental, physical, and spiritual health, there do not appear to be significant resources, or systemic solutions, that make much-needed changes in lifestyles possible where productivity is highly valued. Retreats remain a luxury for people with a certain income level or privilege. For women already feeling overworked and under-resourced, the idea of taking a retreat or spending an entire day observing the sabbath often dies in seed form. This conflict was made clear to me in an interview with June Fowler, one of the experts I reached out to for One-on-One interviews. Fowler advised me to become comfortable with the idea that, at least

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[54] Falkenström, F. (2010). "Studying mindfulness in Experienced Mediators: A Quasi-Experimental Approach" *Personality and Individual Differences,* 48, 305-310; R. W. Hood Jr. (1977). "Eliciting Mystical States of Consciousness With Semistructured Nature Experiences." *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion*, 16, 155-163.; J.E. Kennedy, R.A. Abbott, and B.S. Rosenberg (2002). "Changes in Spirituality and Well-being In a Retreat Program For Cardiac Patients." *Alternative Therapies In Health and Medicine*, 8, 64-73. Quoted in Andrew B. Newberg, Nancy A Wintering, David B. Yaden, Zhong Li, Brendan Bowen, Noah Averick, and Daniel A Monti. 2018. "Effect of a One-Week Spiritual Retreat on Dopamine and Serotonin Transporter Binding: A Preliminary Study." *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 8 (3): 265–78. doi:10.1080/2153599x.2016.1267035.

[55] Christopher Ringwald, A Day Apart: How Jews, Christians, and Muslims Find Faith, Freedom, and Joy on the Sabbath, (NY:Oxford University Press, 2007),xii.

initially, the project is more likely to attract people represented by the workshop participants (see below). According to her, discussing retreats as a healing and restorative resource is very much a "haves" discussion. She explained, "As we think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, women who are worried about how to pay the bills, feed the kids, get to work, or *get* work are unlikely to focus on their internal needs to be "whole." If this is a path to be pursued, you must come to terms with who your market is. And that market is not all women."[56]

Throughout the Doctor of Ministry program, I have explored the notion that, though women are busy, the need to step away remains imperative. Early in the doctoral process, I held a Stakeholder Discovery Workshop where we tested the key issue (women are busy and need space) and the criticality of the problem. Sixteen women and I assembled on Sunday, October 25, 2020. Participants included women from their early 30s to early 70s, working and retired; Black, White, and Dominican; married, single, and divorced; and one married Lesbian. All spoke from a Christian perspective except the Lesbian, who was uncomfortable; the discussion brought up earlier hurt over the lack of acceptance by the church. She also indicated that she had not been prepared for the heteronormative perspective to be so dominant. In retrospect, I realize that the assembled group of women, while diverse in many ways, did not represent non-Christian, lower educated, or varying socio-economic level perspectives. Each person had at least a bachelor's degree; two had doctoral degrees. In short, I had unwittingly reached out to the very group of "haves" June Fowler identified as my market. Nevertheless, the Discovery Workshop provided valuable information that helped fuel the development of this project.

In the Stakeholder Discovery Workshop, participants concluded the following:

1. Taking time to rest, be quiet, focus/refocus, and (re)generate does not happen organically for women.

2. There is a need for dedicated space and time for women to attend to themselves in ways that are (re)generative, healing, and refreshing.

3. Life is better for everyone when women are whole.

4. Women have many responsibilities driven by internal and external expectations, which influence their roles. Such expectations mean they do not have or make time for themselves or closeness with God, resulting in difficulty fulfilling their purpose.

5. Life is filled with trauma. There will always be a personal or corporate "COVID" with which to deal.

6. Women need space for ongoing, perpetual change, not just another experience.

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[56] June M. Fowler. "Interview Response". Email, November 2, 2020.

7. If addressed, women would operate from a place of validation, feel empowered to speak and live their truth, set more explicit boundaries, and be more intentional about refusing to act from an internal deficit.

The group summarized their findings in this one concept statement: *Imagine a world of healed women*.

**FIGURE 6. *IMAGINE A WORLD OF HEALED WOMEN***

Image created in Canva Pro by Donna M. Cox. Photograph from Canva Pro.

The seven discovery statements became foundational for subsequent workshops, mini-retreats, interviews, and prototyping activities throughout the doctoral process. They also inform the ongoing development of The Watering Place™, which I will discuss in Chapter 6. Based on data gathered during the Discovery and Prototyping phases of project development, participating women offered specific guidelines for getting them to add retreat activities to their schedules. These include locations close to home or work, short blocks of time, advance notification, so they have adequate time to plan and prepare to be away, manageable costs, the opportunity to build community with other women, and a broader definition of spirituality.

# Part One Section Two: Creating Space

**FIGURE 7. *REST IS BEAUTIFUL***

Original watercolor by Donna M. Cox, Dayton, Ohio

# Chapter 6
# The DMI Solution

*Making your way in the world today takes everything you've got.*
*Taking a break from all your worries, sure would help a lot.*
*Wouldn't you like to get away?*
*Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name.*
*And they're always glad you came.*
*You want to be where you can see our troubles are all the same*
*You want to be where everybody knows your name*[57]
*Cheers Theme Song*

In previous chapters, I have examined the physical, emotional, and spiritual issues resulting from rushing through life. I have explored the Biblical mandate for balancing work with rest. I have also probed the benefits of taking retreats. While multi-day retreats are powerful, they remain luxuries for women who already feel overworked and under-resourced financially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. As a result, it is essential to consider methods that do not, at least initially, require a significant investment of time or resources. Though this is a critical need for God's daughters, there is simply no way one person or project will ever fulfill the mission. However, it can reach women, one, five, ten, or 20 at a time in ways that ignite a passion. These women can then reach others within their sphere of influence. This reality was apparent in the gatherings held during the writing of this project (see Chapter 8).

**FIGURE 8. THE WATERING PLACE LOGO**

Commissioned by Donna M. Cox November 2022.

[57] *Cheers Theme Song,* Gary Portnoy and Judy Hart, Addax Music Co, Inc, 1983.

Doxology Ministries International, Inc. created The Watering Place™ as a response to the needs articulated in the earlier chapters of this paper. Recognizing that offering traditional retreats is problematic, especially for those who might most benefit, The Watering Place™ intends to take the Watering Place *to* the women and, in so doing, reduce the associated 'costs' for them. Travel, missing work, and arranging childcare for extended retreats are all additional expenses and deterrents to nurturing the work-rest cycle. I believe that offering low-stake, high-impact opportunities for women to temporarily break away from the Rushing, Hurried, Superwoman complex will provide nourishment that draws them more often to the water. The hard launch for The Watering Place™ is slated for late 2026 when I retire from full-time teaching to ministry. The soft launch started with workshops and sessions held in preparation for the DMin project and will continue as I build partnerships that support the mission.

The Watering Place™ concept derives its name and mission from Isaiah 58:11 and Judges 5:10-11 [*emphases mine]*.

> ***Isaiah 58:11***
> The LORD will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. *You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.*[58]

> ***Judges 5:10-11***
> "You who ride on white donkeys, sitting on your saddle blankets, and you who walk along the road, *consider the voice of the singers at the watering places. They recite the victories of the Lord, the victories of his villagers in Israel*.[59]

The Watering Place™ is a metaphor for space where a person can see her reflection in calm waters, where she can remember who she is and catch a fresh glimpse of who she can be. It is space where a person can stir the waters and be refreshed and cleansed from the toxicity of a life lived on overload. To accomplish this, The Watering Place™ centers creating and holding space for worship, activation, transformation, encounter, and restoration in its missional schema.

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[58] Isaiah 58:11 (NIV).

[59] Judges 5 (NIV).

**FIGURE 9. THE MISSIONAL SCHEMA FOR THE WATERING PLACE™**

Created in Canva Pro by Donna M Cox

The Watering Place™, as a concept, embodies both place and space as important, interdependent constructs. I draw my guiding principle from humanistic geography, a field of study that emerged in the late 1960s as a reaction against the "quantitative, mechanistic models of spatial science."[60] The objection was rooted in geography's inability to "adequately explain the human world and human issues, especially those relating to social institutions, attitudes, morals, customs, traditions, and aesthetics."[61] Theologian Walter Brueggemann's work and that of others have been very impactful. Brueggemann writes,

> … Place is space that has historical meanings, where some things have happened that are now remembered and that provide continuity and identity across generations. Place is space in which important words have been spoken that have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny. Place is space in

[60] Kanhaiya Sapkota, "Humanistic Geography: How It Blends With Human Geography Through Methodology," *The Geographical Journal of Nepal*, 10, (2017): 121-140.

[61] Sapkota, 122.

which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued…[62]

## TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF SPACE AND PLACE

| SPACE | PLACE |
|---|---|
| Left brain: classifies and measures | Right brain: interprets, has capacity for intuition, synthesis, and self-expression |
| Mapped and measured | Animated by stories |
| Location with no social connection or value added | Physical attributes, emotional connections, and psychological perceptions combine to impart individual meaning and value |
| Measurement: captures where things are | Meaning: captures why things are there |
| Location, physical space, geography Ex. Texas, Starbucks, US | Gives space meaning, "personality," and connection to a cultural or personal identity; the "vibe" |
| Defined by abstract scientific, mathematical, or measurable construct | Refers to the cultural meanings people attach to a specific site or locale. |

*Note:* Table 2 summarizes the fundamental characteristics of space and place based on a humanistic understanding of the terms.

The Watering Place™ is a portable construct; it employs any space where women gather with intentionality: in a home, garden, church, hotel room, or other physical locations. As the leader, I take these places and, with deliberate attention to the atmosphere, ambiance, spirit, and purpose

[62] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 4–5.

of the gathering, prepare to do what Priya Parker refers to as transporting the women into a "temporary alternative world."[63]

I invite women to enter this world, drop their superwoman capes, slip off their shoes, and take a deep, settling breath. During the time we gather, women participate in Watering Sessions, exercises designed to create an oasis in time. The Watering Sessions draw upon multiple space-holding modalities, including dialogue, journaling, art, music, dance, and various spiritual practices. Each Watering Session is essentially an invitation to a mini-pilgrimage. Women journey towards a similar destination – healing, rest, restoration, revelation, or an undiscovered landing place. Each woman takes steps, some baby steps, and others leaps, along a personal journey to a more balanced work-rest cycle and living her best life. Though they travel together, each moves through the sessions individually because she travels with unique memories, emotions, and readiness to receive. Through the lens of her prior experiences and revelations received through the Watering Sessions, she attaches meaning and transforms shared space into a private place, one only she can enter and only in the way she can. It is a place she will take with her, a door she can reopen, a room she can revisit at will.

[63] Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters*, (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018), 112.

# Chapter 7
# Holding Space

Because they travel together, each woman's experience is made richer. We might refer to this act of being a companion traveler as one of holding space. As women journey together, they create a container, a safe space, where change or transformation can begin. They create a community where people feel heard and seen or, as author Susan Coffey describes, where a person can "feel all of their feelings even when it feels uncomfortable" for the space holder.[64] While it is laudable and perhaps even sounds easy, the ability to hold space for others is not necessarily intuitive. Most of us are conditioned to listen to respond rather than listen for the sole purpose of being present for another. There is a tendency to offer advice or attempt to fix what ails the speaker. These are not necessarily wrong or bad things but are not always helpful. Consider this, when you pour your heart out to someone, are you looking for advice or the other person to fix you? Likely not. There is an innate need to be held emotionally. This is the essence of holding space. Thus, each Watering Session must be specifically crafted to help participants learn to be fully present for others and themselves.

Heather Plett describes holding space as "the way we show up, the way we release control, the way we learn to trust in each other's wisdom and autonomy, and the way we stay present in the midst of disruption. It's not easy work. It's not pie-in-the-sky idealism. It's not magical thinking. It's complex, it's uncomfortable, it's vulnerable, and it's deep." [65] Holding space is not about speaking encouraging words though those are important. It is, as Michelle Hobard writes, "holding [others] with everything that makes us who we are. We are holding them within our awareness and beyond what we think we can control. We are holding every piece of their story, so that when we do offer our hands and our touch, we are offering them the opportunity to truly feel connected to their bodies, their experience, and their souls in the process of letting go. Therein lies our oneness, our harmony, our truth."[66]

I was first introduced to the concept of holding space when I participated in a "Courage To Lead Retreat for Clergy." Later, I was able to delve deeper when I participated in the year-long "Academy for Leaders Courage Retreat" program sponsored by the Center for Courage and Renewal. These retreats are based on Parker Palmer's fantastic work. They were life-changing and have informed

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[64] Susan Coffey, "The Art of Holding Space," *Massage and Bodywork Magazine for The Visually Impaired*, September/October 2017, https://www.abmp.com/textonlymags/article.php?article=1735

[65] Heather Plett, "What It Means To Hold Space For Someone," Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, accessed August 20, 2021, https://www.taps.org/articles/27-2/hold-space-for-someone

[66] Michelle Hobart, *Holding Sacred Space: Honoring the Subtle Ecologies of the Spiritual Emergence Process*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Redux, 2019).

my work years hence. One of the most powerful tools they use is the Clearness Committee, a process dating from the 1660s in the Quaker community. It is based on the principle that each person has an "inner voice, a voice of truth, that offers the guidance and power we need to deal with our problems."[67] This critical voice has often been silenced by too many demands on time and energy and the failure to allow it to speak. Clearness Committees are small gatherings in which a focus person describes an issue or concern. 'Committee members' listen in silence, only speaking to ask brief, honest, and open questions. They do not give advice or attempt to fix the problem or the individual. Members may take notes offered as gifts to the focus person at the session's end.

I admit to having had difficulty participating in my first Clearness Committee. Focusing solely on the person speaking without jumping in during silence and resisting my natural urge to comfort or fix when there were tears were new experiences. When I was the focus person, having a circle of people whose singular task was to listen to me was one of the greatest gifts I had ever received. After being a listener for each person on our committee and being a focus person, I finally understood the power of holding space in this way. I love the way Plett summarizes it. She explains that holding space means "we are willing to walk alongside another person in whatever journey they're on without judging them, making them feel inadequate, trying to fix them, or trying to impact the outcome. When we hold space for others, we open our hearts, offer unconditional support, and let go of judgment and control. We must be prepared to step to the side so they can make their own choices, giving gentle guidance when needed and making them feel safe. [68]

When my nephew died in August 2022, I flew to Maryland to be with my younger sister, his mother. While we celebrated his life and sat together as family and friends, I was reminded of what my then-husband and I experienced when we lost all our parents in less than two years. Our experience was repeated in 2021 when my brother-in-love died unexpectedly. When death seemed to come knocking back-to-back at our door, I posted a comment on Facebook where I shared my heart. I wondered about the absence of people stopping by just to hang out or bring food when someone died. I felt the lack keenly. When I was growing up, if there was a death in the family, your home became the center of activity. In response to my query, a friend sarcastically responded that she would bring over a stale casserole. She stated her preference to "be with family" in her grief. Another friend agreed with this sentiment. Neither friend appeared to understand the privilege and luxury that is theirs. Both lived in the cities in which they were born and raised. They were surrounded by siblings, parents, aunties, uncles, cousins, and church members who had become extended family. By contrast, when you are a transplant to a city, you lack all that. Neither my former husband nor I had family in the area. As a result, our social media pages were filled with lovely

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Parker Palmer, Excerpt from "The Clearness Committee: A Communal Approach to Discernment" from *A Hidden Wholeness:The Journey Towards An Undivided Life*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), n.d., https://www.uua.org/files/documents/guestkristin/1006_3045_clearness.pdf

[68] Heather Plett, "What It Means to Hold Space for Someone," accessed August 20, 2021, https://www.taps.org/articles/27-2/hold-space-for-someone

comments, emoticons, and gifs. Yet, for all the good intentions, those efforts fell way short of their intended message.

When your heart is broken, when life throws a curve ball, and you are trying to recalibrate your swing, words alone can seem empty. In times like these, we need skin. Even as we pray and feel the presence of God, our hearts still yearn for the physical presence of those who care. No matter how connected we believe we are, social media does not meet that requirement. It has no skin. It cannot dry tears or laugh with you in memory. A kind word on social media can do many good things, but it will never take the place of a breathing person who simply shows up to be present. I was so grateful to see my sister surrounded by people who showed her, in tangible ways, that she was loved. People she had not seen in years, folk who did not know her son very well, made a difference at a difficult time. Yes, there were a bazillion rotisserie chickens, but every piece of chicken, every fruit platter, or store-bought cake said, "I am willing to sit with you in your grief. I care about you. I am available to hold space for you." The sense of presence is what The Watering Place™ intends to provide for women with whom we intentionally share space.

# Chapter 8
# Stories From Space

*There's nothing small or inconsequential about our stories. There is, in fact, nothing bigger. And when we tell the truth about our lives-the broken parts, the secret parts, the beautiful parts- then, the gospel comes to life, an actual story about redemption, instead of abstraction and theory and things you learn in Sunday School.*[69] *(Shauna Niequist)*

One of the most potent ways we hold space for others is through stories. As we have become more virtually connected, there seem to be fewer organic opportunities to connect in meaningful ways. Most social media sites limit the number of characters you can use to tell a story, while others require stories to be in a video format. Sites such as Facebook allow you to write long posts, which people generally do not read because of the length. The practice of families sharing over a meal continues to lose ground to rushed, hurried, overburdened lives. The loss of these storied times is devastating. We were created for stories. Most of the lessons Jesus taught were through stories. They matter. Stories (re)focus our attention on deeper human interaction. When we share stories, we share life. We disclose who we are, our values, aspirations, needs, concerns, and joys. Stories animate the spaces we jointly inhabit. They release us and give others the ability to share in that release. Stories empower both the teller and the listener.

Meeting with groups of teens, college women, working women, and retired women affirmed the importance of The Watering Place™ initiative. The need for women to gather is critical. Though we are more connected than ever through technology, we are less connected physically and emotionally. Something special happens when women come together to share. Sharing spaces that used to happen organically no longer exist or exist quite differently. Generations of women used to gather on front porches, talking while they combed the little girls' hair or in the kitchen while they cooked elaborate Sunday meals. Women once gathered in beauty parlors or during Thursday night card parties. Three of my group gatherings were with Black women who emphasized that African American women need sister circles to thrive. Embers were fanned, and as each gathering ended, at least one person volunteered to host the next. No matter the group's age or focus, all the women thanked me for providing the space. They spoke of how much they needed the gathering and how refreshing it was to be together and talk in a safe place. I had done no more than create an opening, a space, and given a prompt for discussion; the rest happened with little guidance from me. By the

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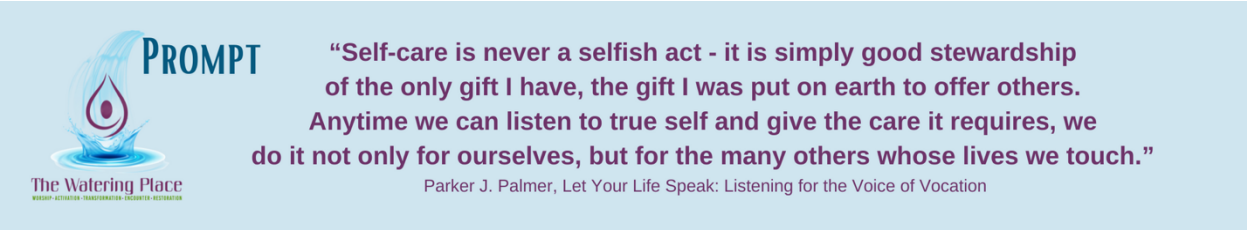
[69]Shauna Niequist. "Shauna Niequist Quotes." Accessed January 4, 2023, https://quotefancy.com/quote/2650513/Shauna-Niequist-There-s-nothing-small-or-inconsequential-about-our-stories-There-is-in

end of the time together, each woman had transformed the space into her place. Based on the reception, I realize that opening space is no small thing.

Listening to people's stories is a beautiful way to hold space for them. I had the pleasure of hosting several groups of women. Stories flowed, even in groups where women met for the first time. The need to share and be heard was obvious. What follows are snapshots of some of the stories I captured in these sister circles. Any names given are fabrications to preserve the privacy of the storytellers.




"I always recognized the need to care for myself even if it meant I had to go into the bathroom and sit alone for thirty minutes to preserve my sanity." Another woman mentioned how her friend developed a spiritual practice of getting into the tub daily to have alone time with God, even if there was no water. Even feeling overwhelmed and overburdened, a woman can be innovative about taking small steps when she understands how critical it is.

Other women did not understand the value of self-care until their children were out of the house. A woman in her fifties spoke about all the years she spent taking care of her family, meeting the needs of everyone while she constantly wondered, "when is it going to be my time?" Under the resentment, latent anger came out in multiple ways. She overate, was constantly exhausted, and caught in an unhealthy cycle. She said yes even when she wanted to say no. She did things she did not want to do because she felt compelled to do them. Her admission seemed to ignite a chorus of yes and amen; like a church meeting, women bobbed their heads in agreement and mumbled affirmation. They loved their families but often felt "lost in the sauce." They used the time everyone else slept to shop, cook, clean, or prepare for the next thing. They had often been tired and simply 'pissed off.'

For another woman, being diagnosed with cancer was very eye-opening. She had fooled herself into thinking she was the only one who could do certain things the 'right' way, in the way she preferred. However, the battle for healing put everything into perspective. She saw that she did not need to carry her family on her shoulders. Another woman said she had had the same revelation. She recalled with laughter the time her husband made eggs for her daughters. One girl came to her and said, "Mom, Dad's eggs taste sweet." She thought he had probably put honey or sugar in the eggs, which was neither appropriate nor healthy. Then she laughed at herself. The girls survived sweet eggs and are alive to tell the story. She made a conscious decision to ignore things not done to her standard. Her health was more important than how the laundry was folded and put away or if the girls ate sugary eggs.

When asked why she felt pressured to "do it all," one woman admitted she learned from her mother. She watched her mother come home from work, walk into the kitchen with her coat on, and start dinner preparations. It never dawned on her that there was another way to care for her family. Another piped in that when she complained, her Mother and Grandmother rebuked her by explaining how they had worked, cared for their husbands and multiple children, and survived. The underlying lesson? You are a woman. Not only *can* you do it all, but it is also *your responsibility* to do so. Everyone agreed that there is a tremendous need to reach out to young women to help them break the cyclical expectations.

Superwomen, the group intoned, are fixers. They see a problem and fix it. One woman, a clothing maker and craft-lover talked about the hours she spent taking every project "up a notch." Her standards were extremely high – for herself – so she made specialized jerseys for her kids, who were all in different sports. She made banners and special projects for every birthday party and graduation. She said she had to be organized to function. Others admitted this self-imposed overcommitment was a way to fill a void and meet needs that should have been met by focusing on their own needs.

Many naturally giving women have difficulty asking for and accepting help from others. They are often surrounded by takers, what one woman called "energy vampires," people who suck all the energy out of others. Some countered that sometimes women do such an excellent job of projecting an image of competence that others think she does not *need* assistance. This, they said, was the value of gathering with other women. In open, safe discussions, they could hear their words mirrored back to them and see, some for the first time, how they contributed to their situations.

For most of the women present, [re]claiming the power of *no* was liberating. For one woman, this meant telling her adult children she was no longer hosting big holiday gatherings. Her children did not like her decision and continued to try to guilt her into changing her mind. She refuses. For another, saying no is intentionally scheduling time for herself. Her birthday is on the 29th, so she takes the 29th off work every month to do something just for her. One person said she leaves the used dishes in the sink to sit with her family after dinner. She smiled as she recalled telling her mother-in-law the dishes would be cared for in the morning in response to an offer to help clean the kitchen. Before making this decision, she would have felt pressured to clear the kitchen. Not so these days. Others talked about a paradigm shift, taking an emotional pivot towards self. As they think about where they are now, compared to years ago, they find themselves moving and talking differently as they spend time with themselves. For another woman, this means no longer feeling pressed to invite everyone to gatherings she hosts. Instead, she permits herself to design her guest lists in nourishing ways.

In this group of women from differing backgrounds, there remained a thread of agreement; women are hungry for the opportunity to gather and share battle scars, victories, and things they have learned and to feel the support of others in skin form.

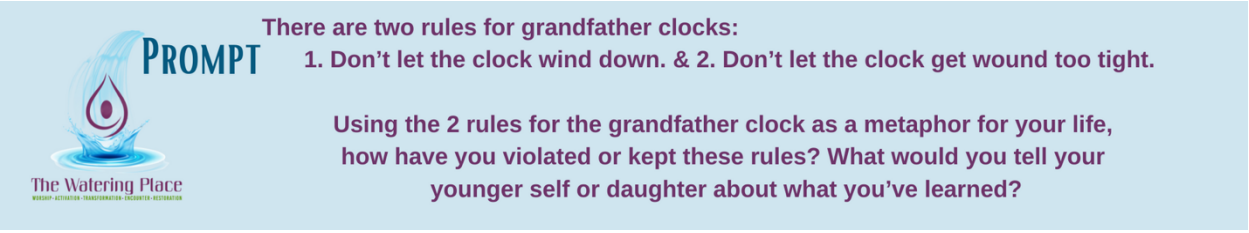
This session was held with a group of retired women ages 60 through the mid-70s. The conversation was rich! The concept of holding space is rare in the vernacular. However, it became clear that the women in the group had always held space for others in various ways. The answers were varied and meaningful when asked how they had held space for others or how someone had held space for them. One person spoke of extending her retirement by a month to sit with the person taking her position. Hers was a highly specialized position in the government that the administrators had delayed posting because they hoped to implore her to remain. Once they made the hire, it became clear that the incoming person would not be able to "hit the ground" running. As a result, she aside her personal needs to make herself available because she was interested in her replacement's success and mental health.

One of the older women likened holding space to mentoring. To her, it meant being open, transparent, and honest while she helped the other person get to the point where she could express herself in openness, honesty, and transparency. It was about walking the journey together. For another, it was being a true friend through the good, bad, and ugly, not necessarily agreeing but choosing to listen without judgment, allowing the person to feel heard. Holding space is recognizing that people have the right to feel their feelings. It means giving people room to emote in whatever ways work for them. If that means crying quietly, sobbing, or screaming, your task as a space holder is to create a bubble or cushion on which people can land. It also recognizes that you do not have to have the answers. The women cautioned against feeling compelled to provide solutions. Sometimes providing an answer is the wrong thing to do. There may be multiple correct ways to handle a concern, and it is up to the person to figure out which works for her. Holding space is speaking life and offering hope.

Holding space well, as one woman described it, comes with a particular maturity level; it comes at that point when you fully understand your inadequacy aside from God. Other participants agreed with this summary, adding their own experiences. Each expressed the role faith continues to play in their ability to be present for others and, ultimately, for themselves.

Presence was of utmost importance to all women and shown by practical actions such as taking food, cooking, or cleaning when someone has a need or is grieving. Holding space is a form of helping, but it is not helping. One person defined it as being present while the person did the work. Helping implies getting in and taking action until the issue is solved. Holding space allows people to learn by doing for themselves, through failure or falling. I like how one woman put it, "holding space is not about me; it's about the person I'm holding space for."

For all the women at this gathering, faith in God gives them the power to hold space and to be fully present for others in meaningful ways. For them, faith in God and the ability to tap into that power comes only through being intentional about spending time alone with God through reading scripture, praying, and listening to music that helped them center. One woman has a five-song morning ritual. She plays these five songs daily to set her mind and ground her for the day. Interestingly, several high school and college women I talked to in other sessions do similarly.




This prompt was the most emotional for a gathering of women who shared intimate stories, and tears flowed freely. Women saw parts of their own stories in those told by other women and reached over to pat the knee, affirm a person's pain, and celebrate the arrival on the other side of the story. In short, during the discussion of this prompt, women held space for each other. Let's look at some of these stories.

Melba had planned for retirement with excitement. She booked a vacation to a location she always wanted to visit. Everything seemed to be in order. Her husband called two weeks before beginning retirement to tell her he was bleeding. He was diagnosed with cancer; the doctor said he had three weeks to live. Her husband lived for three years. Instead of vacations and celebrations, the retirement she had planned for was filled with chemotherapy, doctor's appointments, and caring for her husband. There was also joy during those years. Her husband was a cheerful man who encouraged other cancer patients. Nurses vied to have him in their wards because he was such a positive influence on others. At the same time, Melba spent three years with her clock winding up because she had little time to care for her physical or emotional needs. By the time her husband died, her metaphorical clock was wound as tight as possible.

Janelle found her clock wound too tight when her husband of thirty years decided he no longer wanted to be married. At the same time, she was her mother's primary caregiver. Janelle had to have back surgery and sent her mom to another state so her sister could care for her. Shortly after her mother arrived at her sister's house, Janelle's Mom died. She was hurting, angry, and felt totally out of control. Janelle felt guilty because she could not tell her mother goodbye. She had recurring visions of toppling her ex-husband off the third-floor balcony. Recognizing that her thoughts and emotions were out of control, she sought the help of a therapist.

Rochelle found her clock wound down after caring for her husband, who, like Mary's, had been diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer at Rochelle's retirement. Not only was her husband ill, but her mother also had cancer. For two years, Rochelle cared for Bob, whose condition

worsened until the end, while she was simultaneously worried about her mother. Her circle grew smaller and smaller. Shortly after Bob's death, Rochelle was diagnosed with breast cancer; she had neglected her annual mammograms. She thought she would die or be shunned by others, so she went to bed to wait for death. Fortunately, though Rochelle felt alone in her pain, she was not. One day, she courageously shared her angst with one of her sisters, who emphatically reminded Rochelle that she was not alone. Did she honestly think she would have to go through the battle without her family beside her? Recognizing she had people to hold space for her gave Rochelle the courage to fight. She is cancer-free.

As Charlotte told her story, tears flowed, and her body shook. The woman sitting beside her placed a comforting hand on her back. Another passed tissues while others cried with her. When Charlotte's grandson was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, she was devastated that he would have to deal with this mental health issue. She was also angry with God for allowing it. Her shame seemed to impact her as much as the fear and anger. She was ashamed to discuss the issue with anyone other than her husband. But, in this gathering, other women could identify with her feelings. Another sister reached over and touched her shoulder. The woman beside Charlotte squeezed her knee in solidarity. People affirmed their understanding of all she had carried. Pam admitted to having felt the same shame when her grandson, who suffered from depression, attempted suicide. Mildred talked about a friend who had hidden her divorce from close friends because she felt guilty and ashamed.

Juanita had been shamed by her teenage son, who was arrested when a group of friends decided to rob a little old lady. The sense of camaraderie and support was palpable throughout the living room, where we sat in a circle. Women need women. As Janaye put it, women often hold things in for fear of being judged and because they do not know what others are going through. When women have a safe place to share their stories, they realize others are either going through or have gone through similar struggles. That eases the burden for everyone present.

Joan told the story of first feeling wound too tight and then feeling as if the clock had simply stopped. She had gotten married in her teens and had a child soon after. Her husband, seven years older than her, had severe anger issues and abused her emotionally and physically for years. She received no help from law enforcement for the trauma she regularly suffered. After she exhausted all available avenues with little practical assistance, she resolved that either he would kill her or she would kill him. When her husband next threatened her, she told him this in a calm, quiet voice. Fortunately, something in the way she spoke compelled him to take notice. He never acted on his imminent threat of violence nor struck her again. They divorced, and she could finally breathe. Reclaiming her voice and power allowed her to hold space for herself and doing so changed the trajectory of her life.

These examples from recent Watering Sessions illustrate the power of sharing stories as an effective tool for holding space. The goal of The Watering Place™ is to use as many modalities as possible to enable women's healing, restoration, rest, and spiritual growth. As a professional musician and music educator, I have long been aware of the power of music to inspire, transform, heal, and lead

us into a deeper relationship with God. This understanding has come from professional study, teaching, and my experiences. Allow me to share a bit of my own story with music.

# Chapter 9
# Encountering God Through Music: My Story

Music has been a significant part of my life for as long as I can recall. Although my home was not even what you might call 'modest,' it was filled with the sounds of music: Gladys Knight, Aretha Franklin, and Sam Cooke crooning on the portable AM-FM radio, my grandmother singing hymns or spirituals – I always wondered how she knew them since I rarely, if ever, saw her attend church, my cousins and me singing and playing clapping games. My uncles sat around the kitchen table drinking moonshine out of jelly jars, telling lies, and singing. As paradoxical as it seems, some of my fondest memories involve seeing these men laughing and drinking. They were journeying on the road towards intoxication, yes, but this ritual often propelled them back towards some long-ago God encounter about which I could only guess. Sitting around the table, they invariably felt the clarion call, and without conscious thought, the volume turned down on their laughter, and they began singing gospel songs and sometimes praying. There was a spirit in the room at those times that I could not have explained but was undoubtedly the presence of God.

The neighborhood in rural North Carolina was filled with music. Children bounced balls, played hopscotch, and jumped rope to sophisticated rhythmic patterns. Neighbors cleared an open field and built a one-room structure which became the neighborhood meeting place where the Elks and Eastern Stars held regular meetings. On Friday nights, it became a juke joint where everyone gathered to dance and play cards. These gatherings included everyone in our plait, from toddlers to adults, all dancing, singing, and making merry in their hearts. There was rarely a place you could turn where music didn't play an integral role.

I loved singing when I was a child, and my deep desire was to *be* Gladys Knight. I had it all planned out; I would become a superstar who would return to her small hometown and give free tickets to family and friends. Everyone would be so impressed! My dream of singing on a stage shifted many times as I grew: from being Gladys Knight crooning R&B ballads, to conducting the world's most outstanding choral ensembles as they sang Mozart's or Faure's *Requiem*, and eventually to becoming the next Kathleen Battle singing art songs, arias, and spirituals for mesmerized audiences. In time my performing dream shifted to one in which I trained others to follow their dreams to superstardom. Plans notwithstanding, one thing remained constant throughout my life; music played a critical role in my emotional and spiritual health.

Years ago, I wrote a biographical book, Angels Encamped About Me: Provision In The Wilderness. The book chronicles my life in a family of alcoholics and the many ways God provided 'angels' to show me new possibilities. Though I wrote the primary story about the people, I could have easily written about how music saved me and pointed me to the God who was ordering my steps behind the scenes. Teachers nurtured my love for music. I conducted my first ensemble when I was in the fourth grade. Mrs. Nash put two sticks in my hand, stood me in front of the class, and I became the 4th-grade Rhythm Band conductor. That day is imprinted on my memory. While my home life was

falling down around me, Ms. Reynolds, my 8th choral teacher, cast me in the lead in the musical and pleaded with my family to allow me to do the part. Because she held space for me, I could live in the music and let the music work on a level beyond the natural. No matter what else was happening, singing could transport me to a new reality.

Though I didn't always go to church, even as a little girl, its music drew me. I found the hymns marvelous, and I sang them with gusto. The hymnal was a treasure trove of majesty – beautiful poetry and lyrics that carried me to places and connected me to people I could hardly imagine. Though I had no father, I could envision the one who inspired the words – *Faith of my father living still, in spite of dungeons, fire, and sword. Oh, how my heart beats high with joy whene'er we hear that glorious word. Faith of our fathers, holy faith, we will be true to thee till death.*[70] Later, as a young teen and after an excruciating move from North Carolina to Virginia, I joined the 31st Street Missionary Baptist Church and became a member of the choir.

In this church, I got my first opportunity to sing a solo. Standing there, twisting the strands of my ponytail, I sang *Silent Night*, and I was moved – not by the beauty of my singing – for I lived with a family who reminded me that a bastard shouldn't think too highly of herself. Instead, the simple beauty of the song and the moment – and the opportunity to participate in it moved me. As a trained professional, I now recognize the sweet charm of my adolescent voice. But on that day, all I understood was the connection from my heart to that of the spirit, though I could not have articulated what I felt. I was often confused by the words the preacher spoke, but my soul was frequently lifted above the chaos of daily life; my heart was moved when by song. I wish I had more of these experiences in this church. I did not. 31st Street Missionary Baptist Church was a large and cold congregation. Frankly, I am surprised I stayed long enough to be asked to sing anything. I will never forget the day I marshaled the courage to walk down the long aisle to join the church. The preacher asked if I had been baptized, and I told him yes, I had been baptized at Wall Street Baptist Church in Sanford, NC, when I was nine. The interview was going smoothly until the pastor asked me the *really important* question: "Are you Saved?"

I did not understand the nuances of the question and said no, I was not. The adults in the congregation gasped out loud. You would have thought that I had confessed to being a murderer. Since I was unsure of my salvation, the pastor decreed that I be baptized again. I guess this time was supposed to get it right. However, not once did he or anyone else in the church take the time to explain to the thirteen-year-old girl what it meant to be saved. Even before dunking me in that cold water for the second time, the pastor still neglected to explain this illusive concept of "saved." I could have told him I loved the church if he had asked. Somehow, I had felt *called* since I was a little girl. There was an emptiness in my little heart that was filled when I sang. Being in the choir connected me to God and made me feel like a better person. It is unfortunate, but I think my

[70] Frederick William Faber, H. Hemy, and J. Walton. *Faith of Our Fathers*, 1849.

experience is not atypical. I had been baptized twice and an active member of several churches before anyone ever explained church language in a way that made sense to me.

Because my grandmother, with whom I lived, moved quite often, I joined another church very different from 31st Street. This one was the epitome of a storefront church though we owned a church building, such that it was. In this place, I became intimately acquainted with the rousing gospel works of James Cleveland, Edwin Hawkins, and others; the musical repertoire at Gospel Baptist Church consisted solely of gospel music. Even the hymns had a strong gospel flavor and were best described as "remixes." Singers were expected to 'sang,' which translated means sing with tremendous power. Though the memories associated with singing in the Gospel Baptist Church Youth Choir remain some of my fondest, I was never allowed to sing a solo. My voice type was not appreciated in this church. That didn't keep me from being moved by the other voices. As an undergraduate music student, I performed my junior recital at the church as a warm-up for the real thing. It was a total disaster since classical music was foreign to them. The audience did not know whether to applaud or say amen. When I took a little break so they could take an offering and get someone to play "real music on the piano" – yes, a deacon actually used those words - I met a little old lady in the church basement. I thought she was joking, but apparently, she did not identify me with the person who had been singing. She told me she did not know what the woman was singing, but she was leaving her offering and going home. The deacons asked me to do another recital the following year, and I agreed. By this time, I had figured out what I did wrong for the Junior recital and had prepared more songs in English and including gospel. However, when my accompanist and I arrived at the church, *not one person was there,* and the building was locked. As an adult, I went back to the church and did an entire concert to rousing applause and support. They were simply unprepared to create space when I was younger.

There were two things about high school that I loved. First, being at school kept me away from home. School was my haven. I was a cheerleader, which meant spending several evenings a week at basketball or football games – activities that were, though not supported by my family, acceptable. Second, I sang in every vocal ensemble John F. Kennedy High School offered. Singing kept me sane when I might have lost my mind. The music was beautiful – great spirituals, popular songs, works by the classical masters – it didn't matter; they all drew something out of me that became protective gear. And as it often happens, like attracts like. So it was with one of my best friends, known as JP. He was the black sheep of his family. JP was struggling with homosexuality and trying to find his place in a crazy household. Neither of our families cared what we did unless it suited their purposes. They certainly never attended a concert or anything that might encourage us. As it was for me, music was JP's lifeline. Music rescued him from Richmond, and he had an incredible career performing on and off Broadway and traveling the world. One snowy December night after our choir concert, JP and I walked home together. JP was, and still is, a gentleman. He walked me home even though it was miles out of his way. On the way, we began to sing our favorite songs from the concert. We sang, not just out loud but - loudly! The snow was coming down heavily, and we stumbled along, singing at the top of our lungs. In retrospect, we must have looked like drunks. We had such a great time cheering each other along – effectively ministering to each other in song – that we barely registered the cold. At one point, we decided that I would be Mary, and he

would be Joseph on our way to Bethlehem. Our imaginations took flight, and we created a dialogue between songs. On and on, our drama went until JP left me at my aunt's house. Music transformed a cold, bleak, snowy night from one that had all the makings of disappointment and depression into one filled with joy and re-enactment of the birth of Christ. It could not have gotten much better than that!

All these experiences, I believe, are examples of brushes with the divine. In each, God was present and gently beckoning. Though I could not have articulated it, I knew these were extraordinary, spiritual moments. My life has been filled with similar brushes with God, times that took my breath away or otherwise left indelible marks on my spirit: hearing my children sing a beautifully harmonized duet when they were five and six, crying as I watched Michael Jackson reunited with his brothers on Motown's 25th-anniversary show, singing the Monteverdi *Magnificat* in graduate school as goose-bumps spread across my arms, wanting to fall on my face and weep while singing the alleluia section of Howard Hanson's *150th Psalm*, or being humbled and awed by a standing ovation after I finished singing Undine Moore's arrangement of the powerful spiritual, *Watch and Pray*. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, there are many ways to encounter God, abnormal moments in otherwise normalcy, in whatever way one defines normal – moments that cause a quickening of the breath, a blossoming of something unknown or previously unopened. Yet, as meaningful as these moments are, there is an essential distinction between encountering God and having an encounter with God. Moments in which you encounter God prepare you to be more receptive to an authentic encounter with God, a personal meeting with the God/Creator of the Universe. Music is a door that, when opened, facilitates this meeting. Let me give you an example.

I am the conductor of the Ebony Heritage Singers (EHS), the University of Dayton gospel choir. Because it is an academic, credit-bearing course, singers have no preconceived notions or expectations for an experience with God. Students are not required to have prior knowledge of God; they do not have to *believe* in God. They only need to be willing to sing. As a result, people from all academic disciplines and faith (or non-faith) traditions join EHS. During the past 30+ years, EHS has sometimes looked like a mini–United Nations. Students register for a variety of reasons. Some come seeking something they cannot define but know intuitively is missing. Some have been in gospel choirs before and enjoy the music. Most, however, join EHS because a friend invited them to a concert. The loud music, and the participatory nature of the concert, are vastly different from other Department ensembles or their past choral experiences. They anticipate a semester of fun, so they register. Over time, many sense something that gradually opens their hearts until they are ready to know more about the God about whom they sing. At this point, they are prepared for an authentic encounter with God. The music's power and the gospel message proclamation create a venue for a personal encounter with God of the stories/songs. Some of my greatest joys have been seeing students move beyond random glimpses of God to a life-changing encounter with God. Before each concert, I give students a chance to share their stories. In my tradition, we would call this 'testifying.' Repeatedly, students confirm these statements as their truth and reality. From Jewish students to those with no faith, singing gospel music has literally changed – and saved - the lives of many of my students.

Let me tell you about Michelle, a music major who joined EHS because she thought it would be a fun thing to do. I enjoyed having Michelle in class. She made me laugh, which is an endearing quality to me. Even though she wasn't even sure she believed in God, Michelle wholeheartedly participated. One Sunday afternoon, as EHS performed its spring concert, Michelle's heart opened like a rose in its season. She felt tears flowing down her cheeks, as song after song, she began to connect, not just to the melodies and rhythms. Instead, Michelle connected to the words she was singing. Meaning that had only been shadows of understanding suddenly became crystal clear. By the concert's end, Michelle was lying prostrate on the floor, alternately crying her heart out and laughing for the joy of knowing that God loved her! The creator of the Universe stopped being an abstract idea and became a living person to Michelle during this concert. An hour after everyone had gone home, Michelle remained on the floor, emotionally spent but the happiest she had ever been. I cried as I sat beside her and listened to her story. Without her full awareness, Michelle had been seeking God for years. And because God is faithful, God was present but never fully acknowledged. On this fateful afternoon, Michelle had a life-changing encounter with God. When she left the concert venue, she had a new direction. She changed her major and prepared for full-time ministry.

Music facilitates transformation on many levels, whether we are making music or listening to it. Without conscious thought, people respond to rhythm and melody. This is logical since God created us musical beings. As Barbara Else, senior advisor of policy and research for the American Music Therapy Association, puts it, "We have a deep connection to music because it is "hardwired" in our brains and bodies…. The elements of music – rhythm, melody, etc. are echoed in our physiology, functioning, and being."[71] Our heart beats rhythmically as blood pulses through our system. Sometimes these slow and soothing beats are barely perceptible. At other times there seems to be a complete percussion ensemble lodged in our chests as we react to stress, anxiety, or even joy. Our voices rise and fall in melodic and rhythmic cadences. Our speech often approximates melody. We automatically revert to a sing-song speech pattern when we talk to children or pets. Lovers croon sweet nothings to each other. Contrary to my colleague's ongoing assertion that the saxophone is God's instrument used by all humans is the voice. We all sing – especially if we think no one is listening. And at these times, we aren't concerned with whether we are good at it. In fact, and this is just a sidebar, God expects us to sing. We were created to sing. Singing is as instinctive as blinking.

Because music conveys a wide range of emotions, it has the power to arouse similar emotional responses in music-makers and listeners. Music can induce a heightened consciousness, circumvent the rational mind, and penetrate the heart. Infectious rhythms, sensuous sonorities, and provocative texts all have the power to move people. It can turn a shy person into the life of the

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[71] Honor Whiteman, "The Power of Music: How It Can Benefit Health," Medical News Today, November 19, 2015, n.d. https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/302903.

party. The most reserved find it difficult to refrain from tapping a foot, gently swaying, or closing their eyes during tender memories evoked by passionate music. And the inhibited can be enticed to 'let it all hang out.' It is this property that has concerned the church for thousands of years. The development of Christianity in the West, from the formation of the Roman Catholic Church to the splintering of the Protestant denominations in the 16th century, reflects a history of conflicting attitudes toward the role of music in worship and the lives of believers. St. Augustine, writing in the 5th century, summarized a conflict that continues to plague the church today: music can both promote the highest of religious sentiments and cause a purely sensuous enjoyment that seems to be the opposite of religious feeling. Some people still believe that exuberant music-making and dancing have no place in personal or corporate worship. Others believe that without these same elements, there is no authentic worship. These opposing views may never be reconciled and remain part of the long-standing dialogue concerning the role of music in Christian worship. For this study, I simply draw your attention to the ability of music to cause people to move, to be moved, and to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary – all ways to encounter God.

Not only does music have the power to move us physically and emotionally, but music is also a catalyst for healing. Many people around the world view music as much more than a means of emotional and spiritual expression. They view music as a form of medicine, and healing rituals are an intrinsic part of their overall belief systems. Whenever I teach world music or related courses, I spend a lot of time on this topic. Yet, in preparation for my sacred music and worship class, I found few references to the relationship between music, worship, and healing. Music touches individuals who have been hurt and disappointed. It gives people an opportunity to cry, to express not only their joy but also their sorrow. Music is a salve that soothes deep wounds. It penetrates the mind where other forces fail, breaking down barriers directly or indirectly. According to Rabbi Heschel, music can be a "shattering experience, throwing the soul into an encounter with an aspect of reality to which the mind can never relate itself adequately."[72] In many respects, music's capacity to shatter walls makes music a powerful therapeutic tool. Research supports the effectiveness of music in managing stress, alleviating pain, expressing feelings, enhancing memory, improving communication, and promoting physical rehabilitation.[73] Music's healing character is seen in the Biblical narrative. In fact, David may have been the first music therapist. You may recall the story. The spirit of God withdrew from King Saul, and an evil spirit tormented him. His servants were wise enough to recommend that the services of a skilled musician be engaged. Consequently, David moved to the palace from the pasture, where he serenaded his sheep and praised God on the harp. Whenever the evil spirit troubled Saul, David played. Through the ministration of music, Saul grew calm and recovered.

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[72] Abraham J. Heschel, "The Vocation of the Cantor", The American Conference of Cantors, NY, 1966

[73] Abigal Hagan. "The Power of Music Therapy." n.d., https://belmont.edu/burs/pdf/Music%20-%20Hagan.pdf

There can be no argument that music moves people. Yet not everyone is convinced that this alone is enough. Musician and theologian Howard Best asserts that being moved by music is not the same thing as being spiritually or morally shaped by it. He further states growth only occurs when being moved by music is coupled with a preceding passion for God. In his view, one must already have a zeal for God before music can genuinely move them to the point of transformation.[74] I agree with Dr. Best that music, in and of itself, cannot spiritually or morally shape the listener or performer. Formation is a process, a kind of journey rather than a one-time arrival at a destination. Certainly, Michelle's spiritual and moral formation took place for years after her conversion experience. Yet, it is precisely Michelle's experience and countless others that make me seriously disagree with Dr. Best on the other point. Michelle did not have a passion for God before the Sunday her life was radically altered. Although it helps, I don't believe a person must have a zest for God before transformation. I think music is much stronger than Dr. Best credits. Music engages the human spirit in profound ways. It can carry us into the depths, to places of honesty and healing. Music can force us to face truths about ourselves and our lives that we would much rather ignore. And when music carries the word of God, its power is exponentially increased. Hebrews 4:12 teaches that the "word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires."

When people yield to the influence of music, especially that which carries God's word, they open their hearts and minds for a meeting with God. Let's not get tripped up arguing over style. That's a matter of personal taste. What's good to one may be awful to another. What pierces one person's heart may do little to touch another's. It's not about style. And though those trained in music will argue vehemently, it's not even about 'quality.' I've seen people moved to tears by a grandma singing out of tune. Yet she sang with such passion and sincerity – I might call it anointing – that God honored her song offering and blessed many. It's about what resonates with the listener and is often a matter of personal taste and cultural heritage. The most important thing is that the music – hymn, praise chorus, gospel song, anthem, rock song, wordless moan – whatever the style, genre, tempo, or key - facilitates an encounter with God. And a meeting with God always brings about some degree of transformation. Consider my moonshine-drinking uncles. Sitting around that kitchen table, they were drawn into the realm of the spirit. And for just a few moments, a window to total transformation was opened. For those few minutes, they had the potential to reach beyond their natural existence and grab hold of the supernatural. In those moments, vulnerable, not because of the alcohol but because of the God of their songs, my uncles had a chance to be healed of every hurt, every worry, every issue that plagued their souls. Unfortunately, they chose not to take advantage of those moments, so time and again, they repeated the ritual of drawing close to God but never fully yielding themselves to the possibilities.

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[74] "Unceasing Worship and Artistic Action: A Seeking of Commonality", a paper written and read by Harold Best and to which I provided a response at the 2008 National Association of Schools of Music in Seattle, Washington.

# Chapter 10
# Holding Space Through Art and Music

*Music can heal the wounds that medicine cannot touch.* [75]
*Debasish Mridha*

Music's ability to hold space is evident in Nathaniel Anthony Ayers Jr., a gifted musician whose mental illness drove him from harsh, ineffective psychological treatment to Skid Row and homelessness. Los Angeles Times columnist, Steve Lopez, became intrigued by Ayers, who Lopez saw playing a violin missing two strings on a sidewalk near Pershing Square. This position allowed Ayers to see the statue of Beethoven. Upon discovering that Ayers had attended the acclaimed Julliard School of Music, Lopez began writing a series of columns featuring "Nathanial Ayers' painful slide from a young musician full of promise to a man isolated by mental illness, sleeping on the sidewalk each night with hundreds of others. Through it all, Ayers' passion for music endured..."[76] The columns became the basis for Lopez's book, The Soloist: A Lost Dream, An Unlikely Friendships, and the Redemptive Power of Music[77]. The story gained international notice via the 2009 movie adaptation starring Jamie Foxx and Robert Downey, Jr. Arguably, the one thing in Ayers' life that remained constant and salvific was his intimate relationship with music. This is clearly articulated in an excerpt from a *60 Minutes* documentary in which Nathaniel Ayers performs with pianist Joanne Pearce-Martin. He begins by asking if they could play the trumpet piece. He explains, pointing to his head, "I was thinking in my dreamy, hazy dazy world that the piano and trumpet are not going to coordinate." He plays the most hauntingly beautiful piece with such skill and passion. You can almost see the supernatural connection. Midway through, he puts his trumpet down and picks up his cello as if to say that only the cello could fully express his feelings in this piece.[78] The friendship between Lopez and Ayers has continued for nearly twenty years since their first meeting. Through their relationship, Ayers was able to re-enter the world of performance temporarily, one he loved and which held such deep meaning for him.

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[75] Alexandra Hackett, "Patient Writes And Performs Song About His Healing Journey," Jefferson Health, n.d., https://mageerehab.jeffersonhealth.org/blog_post/patient-writes-and-performs-song-about-his-healing

[76]Ina Jaffe, "The Soloist: Living With Mental Illness On Skidrow," NPR News, April 22, 2009, n.d., https://www.wbur.org/npr/103198515/story.php

[77] Steve Lopez, The Soloist: A Lost Dream, An Unlikely Friendships, and the Redemptive Power of Music, (New York: Berkley, 2009).

[78] *Mr. Ayers Performs*, n.d., https://youtu.be/q9B7nOY1Ft4.

Despite his rise to fame and notoriety, Nathaniel Ayers was not healed and was institutionalized again. On September 15, 2019, the Los Angeles Times published Steve Lopez's column, *A Homeless Musician Changed My Life. I Wish I Could Do More to Change His*. He writes, "Music remains the only medicine [Nathaniel Ayers] willingly takes. Absorbed in Beethoven, Bach, or Brahms, he is momentarily healed and temporarily freed from his demons. Sometimes, as he's lifted by a musical swell, his eyes fill. I always wonder if it's the beauty that tugs at him or if it's thoughts of what might have been if schizophrenia hadn't stolen his dream."[79] I often wonder how his life might have been different had he been treated by music therapists rather than given electroconvulsive therapy without his consent.

## Hearing From Music and Art Therapists

Music therapists are board-certified professionals who understand the potential for music to change lives, restore memories, and ease debilitating medical conditions such as anxiety, depression, and Alzheimer's. They are trained to "assess emotional well-being, physical health, social functioning, communication abilities, and cognitive skills through musical responses, design music sessions for individuals and groups based on client needs using music improvisation, receptive music listening, songwriting, lyric discussion, music and imagery, music performance, and learning through music; participate in interdisciplinary treatment planning, ongoing evaluation, and follow up."[80] Similarly, art therapy is "an integrative mental health and human services profession that enriches the lives of individuals, families, and communities through active art-making, creative process, applied psychological theory, and human experience within a psychotherapeutic relationship." Art Therapy is used to "improve cognitive and sensory-motor functions, foster self-esteem, and self-awareness, cultivate emotional resilience, promote insight, enhance social skills, reduce, and resolve conflicts and distress, and advance societal and ecological change."[81]

I am neither a music nor art therapist, yet, as I described in the previous chapter, I have seen the power of both to transform the ordinary into an extraordinary moment, one that opens shuttered hearts, minds, and spirits. Because a fundamental goal of The Watering Place™ is to use as many modalities as possible to enable women's healing, restoration, rest, and spiritual growth, I

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[79] Steve Lopez. "A Homeless Musician Changed My Life. I Wish I Could Do More To Change His," Los Angeles Times, September 15, 2019, n.d., https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-09-15/nathaniel-ayres-homeless-musician-housing-trieste.

[80] FAQ" American Music Therapy Association, https://www.musictherapy.org/faq/#39.

[81]" About Art Therapy," American Art Therapy Association, https://arttherapy.org/about-art-therapy/

interviewed several music and art therapists. Of each, I asked several questions. Chief among them was how I, as a non-therapist, could use these modalities in therapeutic ways without crossing into professional territory. In other words, how can I use music and art in Watering Sessions with integrity? Without exception, all agreed that I must first know why I want to use a particular modality. Being clear about my intent will help establish clear boundaries for what I will or will not attempt to do. Though music and art can be healing, they can also be triggering, especially for people who have experienced significant trauma. Professionals are trained to deal with the *result* of being triggered. Having experience in pastoral counseling is helpful but may not provide the necessary knowledge to act in the moment. As the leader of the Watering Sessions, I must be aware of when and how to refer people to professionals. In all the work I will do with The Watering Place™, my aim must always be to cause no harm.

Interestingly, the music therapists were much more open to the notion of a non-therapist using music than were the art therapists. Perhaps this derives from art therapy being less established than music therapy. Perhaps their reluctance is related to the recent upsurge in mindfulness and self-care gurus who use coloring and drawing in ways that may not be seated in solid therapeutic methodologies. Colleen Klym, a former student and owner of a highly successful therapy practice in South Lake Tahoe, California, sent the following message, which seemed to be typical of the trust music therapists have for my ability to use music as a methodology with appropriate cautions,

> *The truth is that healing with music existed before music therapists, and healers, in general, existed before therapists. Shamans, native healers, all were the regional healers. Western culture decided all these weird rules around it. I understand that we need to protect people, but I think some of the requirements are overkill and often based more on egos than truth. You have been healing people with music for years....do you!!!*[82]

Another responded, "Music doesn't belong to anyone - or, rather, music belongs to everyone! Please use music!"[83]

Art therapist Nicholas Tate was particularly helpful in articulating the fine distinction between art *in* therapy and art *as* therapy. Expressive art is innately healing and existed before art therapy. Tate recommended using restrictive supplies and activities that provide structure with room for creativity, such as drawing, collages, sculpture objects (model magic), mandalas, zentangles, or leaf rubbings. During art-making, participants may experience emotional responses, expressions, revelations, and personal insights. He cautioned that knowing how to respond to these can be tricky for the untrained. "Art," Tate says, "is language, and therapists interpret what clients use. Once an activity starts to feel as if interpreting artistic creation has become the focus, the line [between art

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[82] Colleen Klym, "Interview Response". Email. 10/10/2022

[83] Rebecca Canastra, "Interview Response". Email. 10/17/2022.

in therapy and as therapy] may have already been crossed." It is acceptable for people to create and discuss their creations if they are not trying to interpret them. "Phrases like 'this was really emotional, difficult to do, or I chose a lot of colors because I was happy' are great. Be careful of comments such as 'I drew mountains, so that means I have mother issues.' That kind of response would be out of the purview of the experience."[84]

Another central question for the professionals was how I could use music and art to create and hold space for women. The answers were quite instructive and will be part of the ongoing test for appropriateness as Watering Sessions are developed. The following is a summary of responses.

1. Music and art can be conducive to centering, reflection, and expression. They are great tools to teach people how to center their minds and breath.

2. Music and art are beautiful tools for creating a sense of community.

3. Music is a space holder. We just need to pause long enough to let it happen. If we allow ourselves to be still and let the music in without hustling and bustling, then we will discover that the space is there already. The leader is the inviter and enforcer of the space. Consider using language such as 'let's just take a minute and notice where we are in our bodies. How are we showing up? What are we coming with, emotionally and mentally? Let's take a deep breath, honor all of this, and just be aware of what else shows up as we listen or create music together.' Noticing our bodies and where we are feeling things is powerful. Sometimes it can be too powerful, so be careful if people start dipping into trauma. Make sure people know how to resource themselves and maybe have a therapist available should the need arise. Music is powerful!

4. Safety is number one. We must make sure each person's perspective is honored. We create space by accepting each other no matter where we are by believing in each other. I think you set an example. Group dynamics are tricky at times, so it's critical to establish a circle of trust from the onset.

5. People can hold space for themselves by slowing down and noticing where they are and what they are feeling. They should not judge but accept and allow the feelings to surface without the inner judge interfering.

6. If you're working with women with significant trauma, be mindful of the music you pick and careful how deep you go. Make sure you have a list of professionals who can help people dig deeper. If things keep coming up as you're using music, you might consider facilitating with a music therapist.

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[84] Nicholas Tate, "Interview Response". Email. 10/17/2022.

7. Develop a symbol, something you consistently use at the end to signify to everyone that the experience is over.

8. Music is powerful and reaches all parts of the brain and the unconscious. When people share music, it is crucial to understand and respond from the awareness that they might be sharing a special treasure they have never shared before. It can be tender and needs to be treated with honor. This is a skill to learn, teach, and establish in any activity where people are asked to share.

9. Art is an expression and extension of the person. Do not critique the art. No censorship. No interpretation. Encourage freedom of expression

10. Remember, it's not about the art; it's about the experience.

11. People may not naturally hold space for others. As the facilitator, it is vital to set the expectation that each person is offering unconditional, positive regard for others.

12. You hold space by knowing the best materials to use and which to avoid. Fluid media can sometimes make people emotional. As a general rule, the messier the materials, the messier the emotions are likely to be. For example, stay away from liquid glue. It can be very triggering for people with sexual trauma because it looks and feels like semen. Use glue sticks instead. If there is any question about material choices, seek advice from an art therapist.

13. Activities that people can do while talking are wonderful for community-building.

14. Practice all processes you plan to use with groups/individuals with yourself first and note whether this was a thinking process for you and whether you found it therapeutic. Processing can be helpful when it comes to "non-thinking" or kinesthetic/sensory experiences.

15. Ask yourself if you can achieve the goal without using art. If you can only achieve the goal with art, you may have crossed the line into art therapy and need to leave it alone.

# Chapter 11
# Through Young Women's Eyes

During the fall semester, I met with three groups of younger women: two college groups and one high school. The diversity in the three groups was significant. One of the college groups was students from the University of Dayton, where I teach. Except for one person from Puerto Rico, all students were White. All were Catholic. The second group was African American students studying at a local HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) and part of the University Campus Ministry organization. All were Protestants. The youngest students were from an area high school in Lake Elsinore, California. The demographic represented Black, White, Hispanic, and Binary. All the women were fully engaged in the processes and open to sharing. The gatherings were quite instructive for me. I learned new words and phrases. During those workshops, I learned about artists whose music I was unfamiliar with. I quickly realized how small my music consumption has become over the years. I was immediately reminded of Len Sweet telling my cohort that, as budding semioticians, we should spend four to five hours a day consuming current media.

Most importantly, these gatherings were revelatory. I realized that if I am going to work with younger women, there is significantly more primary research in which I need to engage. Someone must teach this population to build more margin into their schedules. However, working with women as young as high school requires significant caution. For now, this is not my target market. I deliberately shied away from having the younger women share too many personal stories. As a result, I include summaries of comments from the workshops. These may be useful in future preparation. I used the same set of guiding questions for all groups. Responses flowed organically rather than in a linear fashion. The lists reflect this.

**Guiding questions for Dialogue**

1. **How do you use music?**
2. **How do you use music to help others?**
3. **How does music change you?**
4. **Discuss playlists for homework, worship, housework, break-ups etc.**
5. **What do I need to know about working with young women?**

# High school Women

**Verbal instructions:**

1. **Sit quietly and listen to a piece of music I will play. Do not write or talk. Feel free to close your eyes.**
2. **Open your eyes and listen again. Make notes of any feelings or thoughts provoked by the music. Use any of the art supplies on the table.**
3. **Discuss.**

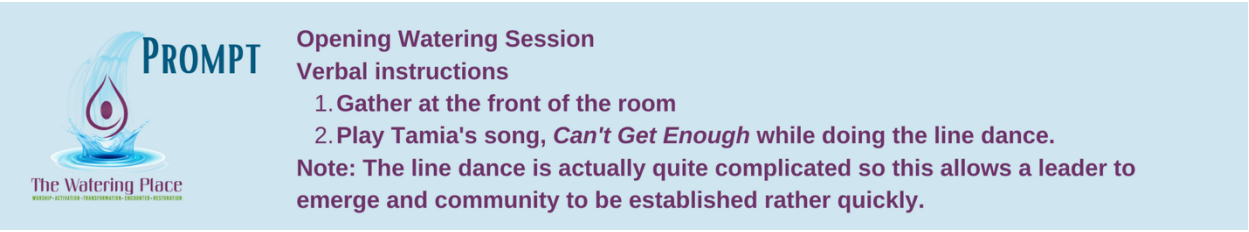
- To feel a certain way
- As a coping mechanism – to change feelings of depression or to escape
- Escape from surrounding and reality
- Don't listen to music because it's distracting and can be abrasive
- Covid changed the things she liked to do: Now she likes to hear music and disconnect
- As a safe space. She recalls times she had to put headphones on her and her sister for protection
- One recognized music as a safe space for her and wants others to find that space for themselves
- Music is a safe place for her, and she doesn't want to allow others into that world
- Typically, teachers only allow students to play music through their earbuds or headphones, but this young lady plays music for the class while she and the other students are working. Her teachers have never told her to turn the music off. The students have come to expect her to play music for them. There seems to be an inherent understanding of the value music brings.
- One girl said she played music sometimes to evoke emotions from her parents.
- To connect with others
- Chooses music to fit a need. For instance, one plays religious music when she feels down.
- Music is used to motivate and create positive vibes. In the words of one young lady, "my sadness don't need help." Another said if she's sad, happy music can irritate her.
- Listening to lyrics is more important than the accompaniment/music. Lyrics tell the story for you. You can analyze lyrics for the story and find yourself in it.
- Genre matters.

- Relate to the artist's life and find self in their music
- What do I need to know
    - Everyone values/uses music differently
    - People have different musical tastes
    - Ask what young women relate to and then choose accordingly

Interesting statements/concepts to explore

- 'can't do silence'
- Body-doubling
- Neurodivergent
- Is there an over-reliance on music in this age group?

## College Women




- Minister to her students through the music she plays to give them a 'jump start' on the day, raise their vibrations (adult ministry leader)
- Like to feel the music, dance to it, get in the flow
- Help her understand how she feels. Sometimes lyrics say what she thinks and feels, things she would never say
- To calm down when angry or sad
- To motivate, uplift; can feel God
- Gospel music motivates her to get into the day
- Music transcends the "rules" about what is or isn't appropriate

- Can build relationships with music by finding common ground
- Music draws you
- Sometimes just listens to the beat because she can't identify with the lyrics
- Use music to
    - Encourage someone
    - Sometimes words are not enough, and music hits differently
    - When you're with friends, you share memories, feelings, and develop relationships as you reminisce
    - To set the atmosphere or set the tone. I discussed how music, singing, and dance can own the atmosphere and shift it. In the group of African American students, I talked about the power of singing during slavery and the civil rights era. I pointed out that I had shifted the atmosphere at the beginning of our time together. After eating pizza, students entered the room and started playing on their phones. Few people were talking, and the room was not the best place for dialogue since it was permanently set up in a lecture style. Gathering them in the front of the room to do a line dance that some knew well, some knew a little, and others learned shifted the atmosphere. The fact that I danced with them also contributed to the creation of our temporary community.
- Listening to certain artists' music totally changes thoughts about prayer, journaling
- Have to be careful about what she puts in her spirit. Some music will push her into spaces she has already outgrown or is no longer healthy. Ex. Cussing, inappropriate sexual relationships
- Bringing a speaker from outside the community to play music helps create a community
- What do I need to know
    - Music is a form of communication
        - Between self and the artist
        - Between self and music
        - Between self and others
        - Between self and self
    - Know the artists; what I play will set the tone
    - The younger generation seems to be listening to music that teaches them not to care
    - The music and vision of artists can be controlling

**Create a time capsule of music listened to during the day.**

1. **Write down as many songs or instrumental pieces as they chose to listen to during the day.**
2. **Make a note of why you chose that particular song.**

This session was very interesting. Since many students use apps such as Spotify or Apple music, recreating their music diary was relatively easy for them to do. Afterward, there was a robust discussion about music's role in their days. Some of their responses are in the list above.

The Watering Place
WORSHIP · ACTIVATION · TRANSFORMATION · ENCOUNTER · RESTORATION
THE WATERING PLACE™: CREATING SPACE FOR SPIRITUALLY DEHYDRATED AND HURRIED WOMEN
PART TWO: PORTFOLIO

# About The Watering Place™ Portfolio

The Watering Place™ is a metaphor for space where a person can see her reflection in calm waters, where she can remember who she is and catch a fresh glimpse of who she can be. It is space where a person can stir the waters and be refreshed and cleansed from the toxicity of a life lived on overload. To accomplish this, The Watering Place™ centers creating and holding space for **W**orship, **A**ctivation, **T**ransformation, **E**ncounter, and **R**estoration in its missional schema.

The Portfolio is a collection of resources and Watering Sessions (activities) designed to help women journey towards healing, refreshing, restoration, and encounter with God. Watering Sessions draw from multiple space-holding modalities, including dialogue, journaling, art, music, dance, and spiritual practices. The Watering Place Portfolio contains song lyrics, poems, memes, journals, prompts, paintings, watering sessions, and other helpful resources.

The Portfolio is a living, ever-changing resource. As materials are used, they are assessed for effectiveness and either remain in the portfolio as is, updated, or discarded. Doxology Ministries International, Inc.'s leadership continually explores current research, hosts stakeholder conversations, and participates in continuing education opportunities to facilitate the best, most practical, and most impactful experiences.

# Watering Session Resources

## Journals

Two journals in the Seven-Day ART [Activation, Restoration, Transformation] Journal Series

- Seven-Day ART Journal on Psalm 126
- Seven-Day ART Journal on The Names of God

## Prompts

Dialogue or journaling starters

## Poems

Collection of poems useful for dialogue or journaling

## Song Lyrics

Collection of song lyrics collected by surveying people on social media for songs they found inspirational or meaningful

## Memes

Selection of memes that fit the WPP schema  More memes are collected on Pinterest at https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/the-watering-place/.

## Paintings

Collection of paintings by Donna M. Cox, which may be used in journals or as journaling or dialogue starters

## Spiritual Practices

Resources on developing spiritual practices are collected either in the WPP digital folder or on Pinterest at https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/spirit-growth/
https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/ministry-resources/

## Coloring Pages

Collection of original drawings commissioned to be used in journals or Watering Sessions

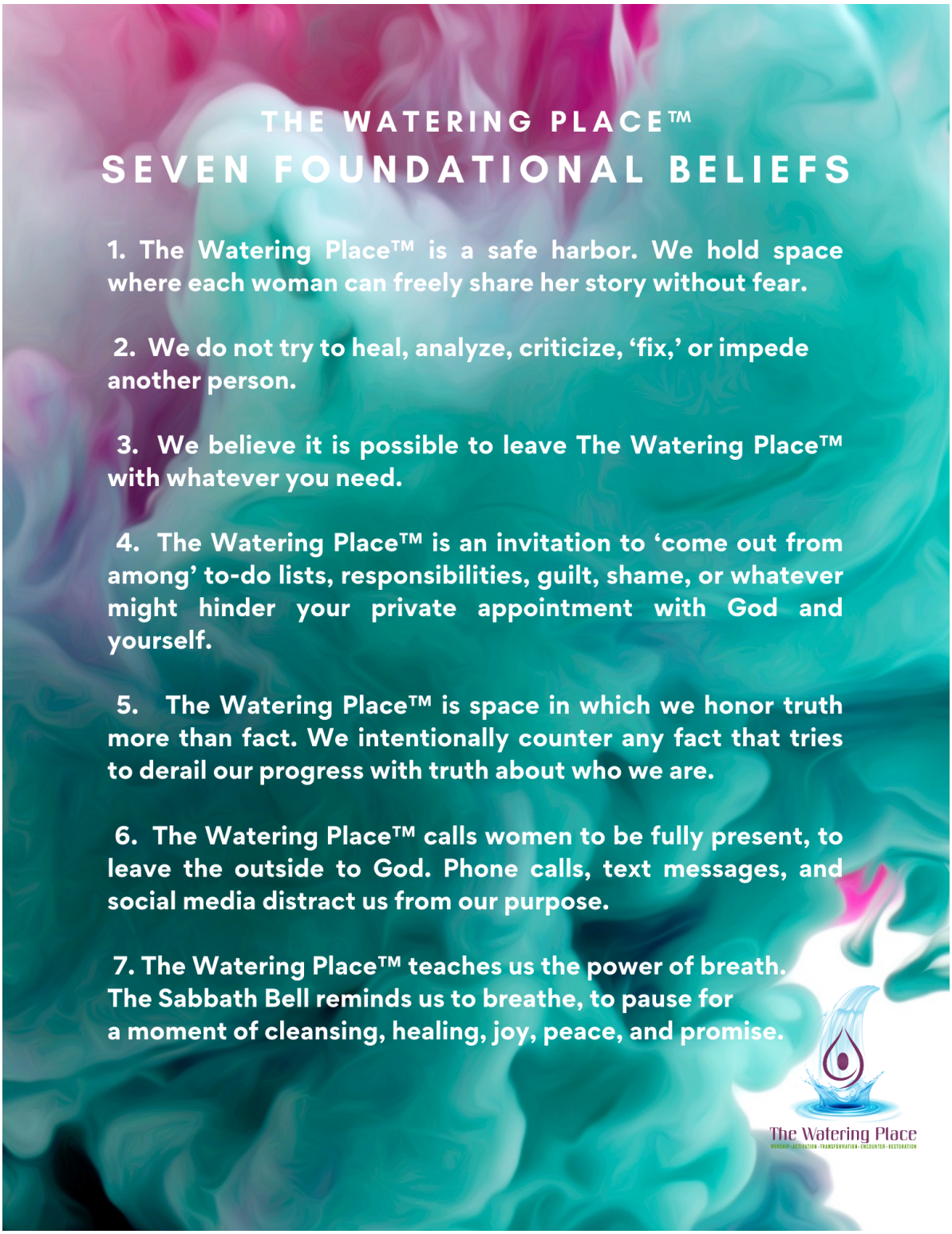
## Written Resources

Selection of resources from which to draw for future Watering Sessions

# Completed Sessions

## Watering Sessions

Selection of Watering Sessions that have either been tested or will be tested in the next six months and updated as needed


THE WATERING PLACE™
SEVEN FOUNDATIONAL BELIEFS
1. The Watering Place™ is a safe harbor. We hold space where each woman can freely share her story without fear.
2. We do not try to heal, analyze, criticize, 'fix,' or impede another person.
3. We believe it is possible to leave The Watering Place™ with whatever you need.
4. The Watering Place™ is an invitation to 'come out from among' to-do lists, responsibilities, guilt, shame, or whatever might hinder your private appointment with God and yourself.
5. The Watering Place™ is space in which we honor truth more than fact. We intentionally counter any fact that tries to derail our progress with truth about who we are.
6. The Watering Place™ calls women to be fully present, to leave the outside to God. Phone calls, text messages, and social media distract us from our purpose.
7. The Watering Place™ teaches us the power of breath. The Sabbath Bell reminds us to breathe, to pause for a moment of cleansing, healing, joy, peace, and promise.
The Watering Place

# Showcased Watering Session Pages

**I am showcasing the following sample pages from the Watering Session Resources:**

- Watering Sessions — 19 of 55 pages
- Journals — 21 of 32 pages
  *Reflections on Psalm 126: From Time Out to Liberty*
- Prompts — 2 of 12 pages
- Poems — 2 of 7 pages
- Song Lyrics — 2 of 28 pages
- Memes — 1 of 5 pages
- Paintings — 2 of 2 pages
- Spiritual Practices — 1 of 1 page
- Coloring Pages — 6 of 29 pages
- Written Resources — 5 of 36 pages

The Watering Place

WORSHIP • ACTIVATION • TRANSFORMATION • ENCOUNTER • RESTORATION

# WATERING SESSIONS JOURNALS

# Seven-Day ART Journal

ACTIVATION • RESTORATION • TRANSFORMATION

## Reflections on Psalm 126: From Timeout To Liberty

**All prints of artwork, including the cover, are original acrylic and watercolor paintings by Donna M. Cox.**
**All other images were commissioned by Donna Cox who owns the copyright, or were created in Canva Pro and do not require attribution.**

# Reflections on Psalm 126:
# From Timeout To Liberty

**Seven-Day ART Journal**
**Activation • Restoration • Transformation**

This journal invites you into Psalm 126 as you reflect on what it means to live in timeout and the beauty of life on the other side. Each day offers a short introduction, a scripture passage, selected lyrics to contemporary songs to aid in your reflection process, and a journal prompt. In addition to the seven-day experience, there are three action pages, Activation, Restoration, and Transformation. These have been placed in the journal in sequence but it is entirely up to you when they are done. You might use these activities to extend the journal from seven to ten days. You may choose to do a daily reflection in the morning and one of the activities in the evening. It is up to you. You have the liberty to decide.

Each page of the journal provides space for journaling, doodling, or coloring. Throughout, there are prints of original art. These are provided as additional prompts for reflection.

Enjoy the journey and expect God to meet you.
Donna Cox

## From Timeout To Liberty

Psalm 126: 1-6

*When the* LORD *brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The* LORD *has done great things for them." The* LORD *has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes,* O LORD, *like streams in the* Negev. *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.* (NIV)

# Day One

My younger sister seemed to spend the better part of her childhood in timeout. When she was older, timeouts became periods of being grounded. She just couldn't seem to walk the straight and narrow for any length of time. She constantly shifted gears. For a period of time, she would be sweet and docile, readily – and pleasantly – obeying Mother. Then she'd be defiant, bent on having her way. One year she was on punishment from before Thanksgiving to nearly Valentine's Day. As soon as she was about to be released from one punishment, she'd do something that landed her back in timeout. The problem wasn't that she was a bad child. She just wanted things the way she wanted them when she wanted them at times. And she wasn't always willing to submit to parental authority. She ignored the standards for behavior that ruled our house. She often forgot to be grateful. And sometimes she was outright defiant. During these times, Mother had to help her adjust her attitude.

This is how it was with the Israelites. They repeatedly engaged in behaviors that separated them from God. No matter how often God rescued them, provided for them, forgave them, they were constantly seduced back to the dark side. Like little children, they demanded that their desires be satisfied never realizing that they were looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places. They gave no thought to the consequences of their attitudes and actions. As a result of their disobedience, God put them in a 70-year timeout in Babylon! They were captured by the Babylonians and deported. That's a very long time! But because God is loving as well as just, He didn't send them into exile without a promise.

> Jeremiah 29:11-14 *For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me. I will be found by you," says the LORD. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and bring you home again to your own land."*

The bad news? They were going to be in timeout for a very long time. The better news? I**t would not be permanent!**

## Read:

2 Samuel 14:14 God does not sweep life away; instead He devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from Him. (NLT)

## Listen:

I Didn't Know My Own Strength
Whitney Houston

Lost touch with my soul
I had nowhere to turn
I had nowhere to go
Lost sight of my dream
Thought it would be the end of me
I thought I'd never make it through
I had no hope to hold on to
I thought I would break
I didn't know my own strength
And I crashed down and I tumbled
But I did not crumble
I got through all the pain
I didn't know my own strength
Survived my darkest hour
My faith kept me alive
I picked myself back up
Held my head up high
I was not built to break
I didn't know my own strength
Found hope in my heart
I found the light to light
My way out of the dark
Found all that I need
Here inside of me
https://youtu.be/J0e6REO1yxY

*Come Out of Hiding*

## Reflect:

When we look at the state of our world, it is easy to feel as if we have all been sent to Babylon for a long timeout. From the COVID-19 pandemic that shut the world down to reemerging to violence, worsening social justice, war, increasing gaps between the wealthy and poor, human trafficking, and political unrest, it can be difficult to think things will ever change for the better. How could reclaiming the promises of Jeremiah 29:11 and 2 Samuel 14:14 help you process current issues?

## Day Two

When I was raising my children, personal computers, phones, and gaming systems were just finding their footing amongst American families. Our dumb televisions, stereo systems, even the telephone, were relegated to common areas of the home. Children did not have cell phones or private music stashes. As a result, timeout meant being exiled in rooms where laying on the bed thinking about the erst-while behavior or sleeping were just about the only options. Yesterday you reflected on the state of the world. Perhaps, as you reflected, your mind was drawn to personal situations. Few of us will ever have to worry about being taken captive by another nation and forced to live in foreign and hostile surroundings. However, in life, we will experience timeouts! Even with all of our modern conveniences and resources, if we are not intentional, we may just find ourselves living as captives.

Look at these definitions of a captive:

- a person or animal that is forcibly confined or restrained, especially someone held prisoner;
- somebody who is enslaved by a strong emotion such as love or anger
- irresistibly attracted to somebody or something;
- forced by circumstances to buy, accept or pay attention to something usually because there is no other option or no means of escape.

Almost everyone can identify with at least one of those definitions, in some way. Have you ever felt like a prisoner because someone else controlled the reins of your life? Have you ever felt so deeply about another person that emotion instead of good sense ruled your actions? Maybe you have gotten so angry or been so hurt by something someone did to you that you couldn't seem to control your responses. If so, you've been a captive. Perhaps your child is out of control and you spend every waking moment worrying about him. You're in captivity. Maybe you are constantly in financial straits; your money is so funny that, if you didn't have caller ID, you wouldn't ever answer the phone. That's bondage, my friend! Maybe you've chosen a path that you know leads to destruction and aren't sure how you can ever make a U-turn. That's captivity!

Whatever the situation, whatever the bondage, God can and does release the captives. Jesus came to bind up the hearts of the wounded, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. (Isaiah 61:1) Because we have access to the Word of God, because we have the power of Christ living within us, we don't have to live in captivity! We don’t have to have a permanent timeout.

## Read:

Galatians 5:1 Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you. (MSG)

## Listen:

Every Captive Free
Matt Gilman

For the spirit of the Lord God is upon me He has anointed me to preach good news Take away all of the sorrow and your mourning, to give the oil of joy and the garment of praise. For I have seen you in your captivity and I will open up every prison door. So arise, and shine for your light is coming and My glory is rising upon you. And I am dancing over you and I am singing over you songs of deliverance and I will set every captive free. And you will be with me for you are mine. And I will carry the weight of all your iniquities. I've carried the burden of all of your shame and I've called you by name and you are mine

https://youtu.be/gYyYgjvrvQQ

## Reflect:

In what areas of your life have you felt like a captive? How can knowing Jesus came to proclaim your freedom give you the courage to declare freedom in those areas? What steps do you need to take to align yourself with this truth?

*Coming After Me*

# Day Three

2005 was one of the worst years of my adult life. In many ways, it was a long walk through the valley of the shadow of death. It was during this dark time that God led me to Psalm 126. These six verses were a light drawing me out of the darkness of despair. One day as I was reflecting on this scripture, I walked through the yard, surveying my attempts at growing flowers and vegetables. I don't have a green thumb but I give it a good try. Anyway, I was walking through the yard, feeling sorry for myself. I was desperately trying to find a sense of peace when I encountered a miracle. I paused by the garage and, for the first time, I really saw a cucumber plant growing there. You know how it is. You can look at something over and over again but not actually see it. On this day, I saw something amazing, not just with my eyes, but with my spirit.

Weeks earlier I had planted a healthy cucumber plant but, for a reason unknown to me, it began to wither and die. Finally, there were no leaves or stalks. Nothing remained of the plant. I never plucked out the root. I figured it would just fertilize the soil. Somehow, without my input or knowledge, this plant I had given up for dead was suddenly standing over six feet tall! And it had several cucumbers on it. These weren't regular cucumbers either. Each one was over a foot long! That alone was a miracle since I hadn't given it any fertilizer. I hadn't even watered it. But there was more. I did not expect these big ole cucumbers to taste good. But they were delicious. This plant had neither been watered nor fed. Yet it rose out of the prison of untended soil to nudge me towards freedom. A simple cucumber plant reminded me that, though I was imprisoned by pain, despair, and worry over my future, I didn't have to stay that way. I could be free.

That's amazing news. However, and this is a big however, freedom ain't free. It will cost you something. God will open the door but God will not drag you out. Most of the time, if we are truly honest, we live in a self-imposed timeout. And we blame everyone but ourselves. But, it's rarely the situation that holds us prisoner! It's much more often the way we choose to handle the situation that does it. And if sidelining ourselves weren't bad enough, we begin to make ourselves comfortable in timeout. We decorate our little area of the world and tell ourselves this is the best it's ever going to be. Sometimes we're afraid of freedom. Freedom requires responsibility. In some ways, captivity is easier to deal with. It's the demon we know. There is something comforting about our areas of dysfunction. But life behind emotional, physical, spiritual, or financial bars is no life at all. What a shame to be sitting inside a prison when the door has already been unlocked! Release is available to you. Jesus signed your pardon with the shedding of His blood!

Accept the pardon and walk into your freedom.

## Read:

2 Corinthians 3:17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (NLT)

## Listen:

Rise
Katy Perry

I won't just survive
Oh, you will see me thrive
Can't write my story
I'm beyond the archetype
I won't just conform
No matter how you shake my core
'Cause my roots, they run deep
Oh ye of so little faith
Don't doubt it, don't doubt it
Victory is in my veins
I know it, I know it
And I will not negotiate
I'll fight it, I'll fight it
I will transform
When the fire's at my feet again
And the vultures all start circling
They're whispering, you're out of time
But still I rise
This is no mistake, no accident
When you think the final nail is in,
think again
Don't be surprised, I will still rise

*Just Resting*

## Reflect:

Think about something or someone in your life that you know is holding you back from being the best version of yourself. Be very honest with yourself. What do you gain by staying attached? What would be different if you simply let go?

## Day Four

We are likely to always remember, with clarity, when COVID-19 shut the world down. The suddenness and uncertainty had such a profound impact that it will be years before we fully understand and recover. I was teaching on that Tuesday night. I had already been given a heads-up that the University would begin spring break earlier and extend it for an additional week, an action that would mean no spring concert for my ensemble. The word became official in the middle of class. I dismissed, expecting to see my students in person two weeks later. None of us expected that two weeks to become two years of captivity to the Coronavirus. The class of 2020 missed all of the rites and rituals that mark the completion of their studies. When they went home, they didn't even have their stuff which remained on campus for months before they could return in shifts to retrieve it. The campus became a ghost town as faculty, staff, and students began the arduous task of retooling to deliver educational services. Two years after the class of 2020 left campus for an extended spring break, we welcomed them back to celebrate their accomplishments. The atmosphere was thick with a very different kind of energy. We laughed and cried tears of joy. The stories of how each had emerged from the shutdown were amazing.

In a similar manner, the Israelites had gone into captivity with heads hanging down, shoulders bowed and singing the blues. But that's not how they came out! Being shut down in Babylon had been devastating. They had lost their national identity and security as well as their freedom. But, on their march back to Jerusalem, they are a different group of folk. They are a people reclaiming everything they had lost, including their ability to dream.

Nothing kills dreams faster than captivity. When you are exiled, either because of your own sinfulness or because of situations you've let get the best of you, it is difficult to keep dreams alive. Prisons are oppressive places, no matter how you dress them up. When you are held captive, your humanity is destroyed, bit-by-bit. Without realizing it, dreams give way to nothingness. Ah, but when you walk out of the bondage and into fellowship with God, everything changes. People who are free, dream! Free folk have hope for a positive future. Life looks better when you're not viewing it through the bars of self-doubt, oppression, repression, and depression. Life takes on more clarity when it is not viewed through the prism of fear, anxiety, lust, poverty, self-hatred, or anger. You see yourself doing better. You imagine yourself with a new job, a stronger marriage, and children living for Christ. When you walk out of the prison of your mind you envision a community without boarded-up buildings and stores catering to the baser side of nature. You smell the sweet aroma of peace and wholeness. And what you can dream can become a physical reality!!

Timeout is over and you're free to go play! Dream big. Dream in technicolor. Dream in full expectation that your dreams can, and will, come true!

## Read:

Habakkuk 2:2-3 Write the vision and engrave it plainly on [clay] tablets so that the one who reads it will run. For the vision is yet for the appointed [future] time. It hurries toward the goal [of fulfillment]; it will not fail. Even though it delays, wait [patiently] for it, because it will certainly come; it will not delay. (AMP)

## Listen:

Write The Vision
Patrick Love

Write the vision, make it plain;
That they may run and not faint.
Though the vision is only for a while,
It shall speak and not lie.
For if the Lord said it,
You can count on it;
He will do just what He said.
It is so. Yes, it is so.
He will do just what He said.

*Celebration*

## Reflect:

Think of a dream you've been hesitant to grab hold or lean into. What keeps you from releasing the dream into the atmosphere? Write the dream. Give it as many details as possible. Create a dream board. Place it where you can see it often. Add to it as often as you need to before you take the next step and make a plan for how you will pursue the dream.

## Day Five

When I was minister of music at a local church, there was a woman in the choir who had the worst attitude I had ever seen. She consistently came to rehearsals late or missed altogether. She had a rapier tongue and didn't mind using it. Frankly, I was a bit afraid of her so, when she stopped coming to rehearsals, I was relieved. To my chagrin, I did not notice when she stopped attending church. One Sunday morning, I glimpsed her sitting in the back during the service. After church, she came towards me with her arms outstretched. I was wary, half expecting her to spew angry words. But, when I looked into her face, I saw a new person. She had a glow, a softness about the eyes and mouth I had never seen before. I found out later that she had been held captive to a very difficult home situation. Once released, her entire demeanor changed. Today I know her as a loving, beautiful woman.

Like my choir member, when the newly-released Israelites made their way back to Jerusalem, everybody they encountered could see a discernible difference. Not only were they reclaiming their ability to dream, they had a new pep in their step. Their heads were lifted high. They had smiles on their faces. They stood taller and walked lighter. Gales of laughter and songs of joy permeated the air. It was Carnival time in the middle east.

This kind of transformation is possible for you. When you are free, things change. It doesn't matter what you've done or what anyone has done to you. It doesn't matter if people count you out like I did my cucumber plant. Jesus was born, lived, and died so you can have an abundant, joyful, free life. Grab hold of that truth and make it your own. When people see your before-and-after shots, even the haters will marvel at the changes they see. Rather than singing the poor-me-blues, your heart will be filled with gratitude and your mouth will overflow with songs of praise.

## Read:

Psalm 30:11-12 You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy, that I might sing praises to you and not be silent.O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever! (NLT)

## Listen:

Happy
Pharrell Williams

It might seem crazy what I am 'bout to say. Sunshine, she's here, you can take a break. I'm a hot air balloon that could go to space with the air, like I don't care, baby by the way because I'm happy. Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof. Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth. Clap along if you know what happiness is to you. Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do. Here come bad news talking this and that. Well give me all you got, don't hold back. I should probably warn you I'll be just fine. No offense to you don't waste your time. Here's why. Can't nothing bring me down; my level's too high to bring me down because I'm happy

*Dancing Day*

## Reflect:

When is the last time you just danced with total abandonment? If it has been longer than a few days, stop what you are doing *right now*. Open up Youtube and play Pharrell's Happy. Get up and dance. It doesn't matter if you think you can't dance. Jump. Skip. Hop. Just move! It's not about dancing, anyway. It's about feeling free. God will meet you while you let the rhythm run through your body. When the song is over, do it again.

Now, grab a pen and write down how you feel. Is there a part of your body or mind where you now feel more of a sense of release than before you started? Do you feel more alive now? How will you gift yourself this experience in the future?

## Day Six

Several years ago, our church introduced Kris Vallotton's teaching on the pauper's mindset and we were encouraged to take the Prince and Pauper quiz. I had a rough childhood so I knew I probably used to have a pauper's mentality. Yet, I was convinced I had already outgrown it; I would "ace" the quiz. Not! I was shocked to find that, despite my life being drastically different than it had been, I still had a poverty mentality. Paupers act as if resources are limited and often fear not having enough. They get their identity from what their belongings or the positions they hold. Paupers have a difficult time seeing God as a 'good good father' who lavishes His children with great gifts. This revelation required me to (re)claim my inheritance as a child of God and joint-heir with Christ.

Coming out of timeout required the Israelites to make a shift in their thought processes. It is impossible to be a prisoner for seventy years and not be impacted. But poverty was not their real identity. They were God's chosen people. So, as they traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem, as they shook off the vestiges of captivity by singing and praising, they remembered who they were. While they rehearsed all God had done for them, they remembered God's covenantal promise to restore their fortunes.

Only children who are confident of Mom's and Dad's love have the audacity to ask for abundant blessings after they've been in timeout! That's just what the Israelites did. They cried out to God to restore their fortunes like the streams in the Negev. This is significant. The Negev River was bone dry in the summers but when the winter rains came, it was like a new river. Water flowed freely and generously nourished the banks. Everything it touched was vibrant and blooming with life. They were bold enough to ask God to ask for abundant resources and Divine favor in every area of their life.

You might be in a summer right now but your winter rains are just around the corner. Get ready! When God rains in your life not only will you be refreshed, you will bless everything you come in contact with. There is no need to be hesitant to remind God of the promises to which you are an heir. Don't be content asking God for a thimble-sized blessing when God is willing to drench you!

Take the Prince and Pauper's test
https://identityproject.us/wp-content/uploads/Prince-and-Pauper-Test-editable.pdf

## Read:

Psalm 30:4-5. All you saints! Sing your hearts out to God! Thank him to his face! He gets angry once in a while, but across a lifetime there is only love.The nights of crying your eyes out give way to days of laughter. (MSG)

## Listen:

Believe For It
CeCe Winans

They say this mountain can't be moved
They say these chains will never break
But they don't know You like we do
There is power in Your name
We've heard that there is no way through
We've heard the tide will never change
They haven't seen what You can do
There is power in Your name
So much power in Your name
Move the unmovable
Break the unbreakable
God we believe,
God we believe for it
From the impossible
We'll see a miracle
God we believe,
God we believe for it

Power Posture

## Reflect:

I invite you to be courageous for a moment. What is something you would really like to have in your life, something so big you haven't given yourself permission to fully consider? Maybe it's a new career, an important relationship, a place you would love to travel, or something amazing you would love to do for someone else. Whatever it is, name it, then talk to God about it.

## Day Seven

In my life, I've had many seasons of exile, times when I've felt alone, abandoned, irrelevant, uncertain, impoverished, and even spiritually bankrupt. I've often felt like the woman in the old lotion commercial. One good wind would break me into a million pieces to be carried away on the first wind. It is possible you came to Day Seven of this journal feeling some of these same emotions. It is also quite possible to be in timeout in one area of your life while you are free in another. Here's the good news. Life is a journey filled with periods of timeout and freedom. The goal is to spend more time in freedom than in captivity.

Yes, you will weep. Things may not go the way you *want* them to. They might not be going the way you *prayed* they would go. But there is a remedy to living in timeout. It's all connected to the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping. Too many people reduce this to giving money. Psalm 126 gives you another thing to sow. You can sow your tears! You can sow them and expect to reap with songs of joy. God will turn your mourning into dancing. God will take the pain you give back to Him as a seed sown against the promise of a mighty harvest. If you're in timeout, now is the time to sow – money, time, talents, whatever it is you have. The act of sowing helps to take the focus off your pain as you look to God and give back to others.

When I was in a valley place, one where I thought I had nothing to give, God sent people to me so I could minister, not out of my strength, but out of my brokenness. I have to be honest. I didn't like it. I was angry God would expect me to dry the tears of others while my own were flowing freely. In this timeout, God reminded me that nothing is lost or wasted in His economy. The very thing that imprisons you can be the key that unlocks someone else's door. Your willingness to share (sow) will provoke God to take what you give (seed), watered by your tears, and return a harvest!

God is a God of multiplication and will never repay you with just any ole kind of harvest. God can take the seeds of a former captive and work a double miracle. You will get a harvest and more seeds to sow!! God gives you double for your trouble- not in the sweet by-and-by but in the land of the living! You never have to worry that God will default on His debt. God always pays with interest. God restores - not in trickles - but with streams and floods of blessings.

If you are in timeout today, now is the time to make up your mind to walk out. Even while you're pushing beyond barriers that threaten to keep you imprisoned, even with tears streaming down your face, even with your heart broken, you can sow. You can remind God of His promise to restore the years the locusts have devoured. Your life, though dry as the Negev River in the heat of summer can be flooded with the waters of God's love.

## Read:

Psalm 126: 4-5 And now, God, do it again — bring rains to our drought-stricken lives so those who planted their crops in despair will shout hurrahs at the harvest; so those who went off with heavy hearts will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing. (MSG)

## Listen:

Lord of the Harvest
Fred Hammond

You're Lord of the harvest and we worship You this day. Eternal Lord remains the same age to age. All our love, all our praise, night and day with this song and our lives, now we prove there's no one to take Your place. Lord You rule. We come to worship You. You are my daily bread. You are my living well. You are my present help. You are the Lord of the harvest.

*Aliyah's Joy*

## Reflect:

Reflect on an area of your life where there seem to be more tears than growth. How does knowing that your tears are so important to God that He records them in His book make you think differently about your tears? (Psalm 56:8) How can you sow your tears in expectation of a harvest?

# Activation Activity

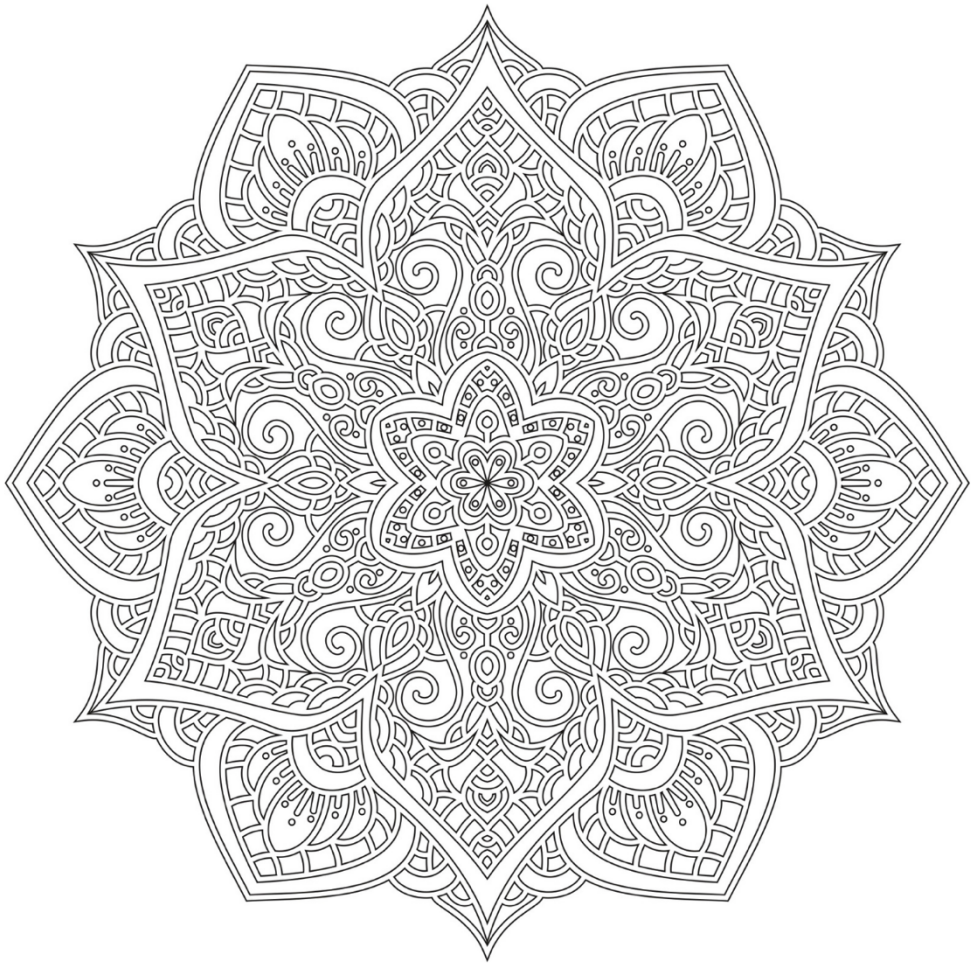
Today you will do an activation activity designed to help you hear God's voice.

- Find a place where you can sit comfortably and quietly for a while.
- Select your favorite quiet praise song or meditation music.
- Sit in stillness as you listen to the music. Imagine God sitting next to you. Welcome God into this time of intimacy and activation. Ask God to speak and open your heart to hear. Use the space below to write whatever flows from your mind and heart. Do not correct grammar, spelling, or censor what you write. Just keep the pen moving on the paper. Do not stop to read what you are writing or worry about whether it makes sense. Give yourself totally to the spontaneous flow of words and images. Believe God desires to be with you and wants to speak to you.
- Press through feelings of anxiousness and silence the voice of the doubter or critic. Keep writing until nothing else comes.
- Turn the paper over and just breathe deeply for a few minutes.
- Thank God for loving you and being with you during this activation.
- Turn the page to the front and slowly read what you wrote. See what God has spoken. Circle or highlight key phrases. You will likely be surprised!

## Reflect:

# Restoration Activity

Coloring and doodling can be powerful spiritual disciplines. As you color, allow Holy Spirit to minister. You might add words or other images as they come to mind. Extend the design to fill the entire page. There is no right or wrong way to do this. The goal is to simply be present.



# Transformation Action

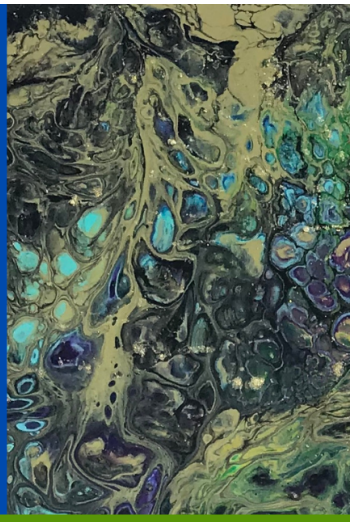
Take time to review your journey through reflections on *Psalm 126, From Timeout to Liberty*. Look for moments of revelation and take special note of them. As you read what you have written, look for insights you may have not fully processed. In what ways do you feel more able to redeem your periods of exile? Imagine yourself living in *total* liberty. What does that look like? How does it feel? As you continue the journey, celebrate every milestone.

## Listen:

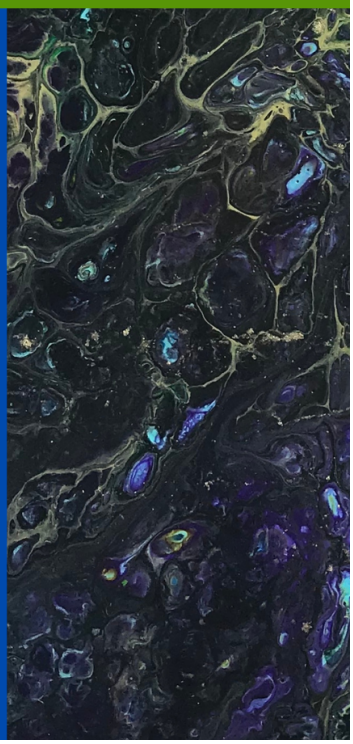
## Reflect:

Every Prayer
Israel Houghton and Mary Mary

I heard 'em say He brought me from a mighty long way
And now today I can testify that I believe it
And on my way I realized He's the one who kept me
When the storms of life arise, sleepless nights and desperate cries
He has captured every tear assuring me He hears
Every prayer, waiting on the answer only to discover He is near
And He hears every prayer for He has done great things
And I believe He's a God that always answers prayer
I heard 'em say the prayers of the righteous availeth much
And now today I can testify that I believe it
Now on my way I wanna let you know that He will keep you
When the storms of life arise, sleepless nights and desperate cries
He's captured every tear assuring me that He hears
Every prayer, waiting on the answer only to discover He is near
And He hears every prayer for He has done great things
I believe He's a God that always answers prayer
Don't despise the tears you've cried
Or the prayers that you have prayed
Heaven heard your every word
And the answer, the answer's on the way



**Seven-Day ART Journal: Activation, Restoration & Transformation, Psalm 126: From Timeout to Liberty, is the second volume in a series of week-long journals. Drawing inspiration from contemporary song lyrics and Holy Scripture, each volume offers guided reflection around the Journal theme and Activation, Restoration, and Transformation Activities designed to build faith. Each volume combines , prayer, original art work, coloring, doodling and writing prompts in an easy-to-use format.**



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**https://revdonc.wordpress.com**

The Watering Place

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## WATERING SESSIONS

# PROMPTS

"We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet." (William Butler Yeats)

"All journeys have a secret destination of which the traveler is unaware."

(Martin Buber)

Within you, there is a stillness, a sanctuary, where you can retreat at any time and be yourself. (Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha)

We don't have a choice about being in the tumbler; we do have a choice about whether to be crushed or smoothed. (unknown)

Every beginning comes from some other beginning's end. Seneca (ca. 4 BC – 65 AD)

Every person needs to take one day away. A day in which one consciously separates the past from the future. Jobs, family, employers, and friends can exist one day without any one of us, and if our egos permit us to confess, they could exist eternally in our absence. Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us. (Maya Angelou)

"Self-care is never a selfish act - it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch." (Parker J. Palmer)

The soul speaks its truth only under quiet, inviting, and trustworthy conditions. (Parker J. Palmer)

Busyness is a drug that suppresses pain.

Holding space is an act that is at once totally present and totally invisible. It is, like the Tao, an activity that is characterized by paradox. (Harrison Owens)

Silence is good.
HOLD SACRED SPACE!

Listen with expectancy but not with an expected outcome. Trust the gift of time and attention.

Everything that happens to you is your teacher. The secret is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life…. And be taught by it.

(Polly Borends)

The ego hates to rest.
The ego doesn't want to
let God, or sleep, or rest
or ???? mend up the
raveled sleeve of care.
The ego wants to handle it all by herself!
Fretting springs from a determination
to get our own way…
All our fret and worry are caused by calculating
without God
(Oswood Chambers)

Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over." Octavia E. Butler

All journeys have a secret destination of which the traveler is unaware." (Martin Buber)

*"Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace even if your whole world*

*seems upset." (Saint Frances de Sales)*

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Women need space and silence. We too quickly give away our energy. There's something about holding that richness. (Natalie Goldberg)

---

Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path. (Brené Brown)

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When we no longer know what to do, we have come to our work.

When we no longer know which way to go, we have begun our journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

---

What does it mean to hold space for someone else? It means that we are willing to walk alongside another person in whatever journey they're on without judging them, making them feel inadequate, trying to fix them, or trying to impact the outcome. When we hold space for other people, we open our hearts, offer unconditional support, and let go of judgment and control. (Heather Plett)

---

**Fire**

What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
A breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs packed in too tight can douse the flames almost as surely
as a pail of water would.
So building fires requires attention to the spaces in between as much as to the wood.
When we are able to build
open spaces in the same way we have learned
to pile on the logs, then we can come to see how
it is fuel, and the absence of fuel together, that make fire possible.
We only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.
A fire grows simply because the space is there, with openings in which the flame That knows just how it wants to burn can find its way.

(Judy Sorum Brown)

---

How would you spend your time if there were no inner or outer expectations and no worries about resources? What if you could focus entirely on what your soul is suggesting?

---

For violent fires soon burn out themselves; small showers last long, but sudden storms are short. (William Shakespeare, King Richard II)

---

For humankind, a growing gap between our inner selves and outer selves -- an imbalance between how we live our lives and how we would like to live them-- leaves the spirit thirsting for renewal

For many, renewal and re-creation come with time spent in the natural world. The human spirit and the open landscape are inextricably connected. In feeling the spirit of place,

we reconnect with the spirit of self. (Sabra Field and J. Lingelbach)

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## WATERING SESSIONS

# POEMS

**I Love the Rain**
**Donna Cox**

I love the sound of the rain,
beating against the windows,
A rhythmic tap tap tap on the roof
The wind carrying the rain in several directions at once
Creating a counter rhythm
A sudden silence,
Then a rapid renewal of the patter
Rhythm, rest
Tension and release
I love the sound of the rain
Pulsing through my body
The boom of random thunder
A quick flash of lightning
No fear of getting wet,
Of even being drenched

**Keep Pressing On**
**Donna M. Cox**

You are stronger than you think you are
You are more talented than you can imagine
You have more possibilities than you can see
You are wiser than you ever hope
You are all these things and more
Because you are made in the image of God
And God is all of these and more.
Keep pressing on!
Eyes have not seen
Ears have not heard
Nor has it entered into your imagination
Everything that God has prepared for you

**Poem for Pressing In**
**Donna M. Cox**

This morning feels sluggish;
pressing in takes effort.
The mind wants to wander along pathways of its own choosing.
Images of to-do lists
Echoes of unfinished conversations
Stomach grumbling and demanding to be fed vie for first place.
In a space that seems far off
I hear the melody and refrain,
'We lift you up; we lift you higher,'
And I know!
It doesn't matter what I- or even the atmosphere- 'feel' like,
I get to choose.
So I deliberately shift my thoughts to Holy Spirit Who patiently and lovingly bids me 'come '
And I set down my pen!

**Silent Flight**
**Chris Roe**

In the silence
The clarity of your voice,
Climbs high
Upon the eagle's wings.
The chains of doubt
That imprison my soul,
Fall away beneath my feet.
In the freedom and majesty
Of the sentinel's gaze,
Faith is strengthened
And hope returned
To a weary heart,
Upon the silent flight
Of eagle's wings.

**A Prayer in Spring**
**Robert Frost**

OH, give us pleasure in the flowers today;

**Direction (May I Suggest)**
**Egal Bohen**

And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;
And make us happy in the happy bees,
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird
That suddenly above the bees is heard,
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,
And off a blossom in mid air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,
To which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends he will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

**Sunday Morning**
**R.L. Nenonene**

Jesus is on
Mother of the church, deacon board, morning announcements
The main line, tell him
Sunday school, altar call, your favorite Pew
What you want
The usher board, tithes and offerings, the sick and shut in list
Jesus is on the main line
Amen Pastor, holy dance, tambourines
Tell him what you want
Peppermints, mama pinches, white sock with lace ruffles
You just
Big yellow hats, white gloves, handkerchiefs,
Call him up
Baptisms, sermon, hallelujah
And tell him
Pray list, sang girl, The doors of the church are open
What you want.

If we lack a sense of direction in our lives
May I suggest, it might help to find out:

What we are
Where we are
Why we are here
What we want
Why we need it
And where (if anywhere)
We think we are going
(After having found all this out)

And perhaps, while on that path
We should also try to be nice.
Because we never know
When we might need some help
Along the way

**Kindred Spirit**
**Chris Roe**

Walk awhile upon my journey
And steal a place in my heart,
With your eyes
Upon these words,
You, kindred spirit,
Can touch my soul.

**Our Real Work**
**Wendell Berry**

It may be that when we no longer
know what to do,
we have come to our real work
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey.
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.

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## WATERING SESSIONS

# SONG LYRICS

**A Rose Is Still A Rose (Aretha Franklin)**

There was a rose I knew
I met her once or twice
before she was a pretty sweet thing, not the least bit insecure

Then you came with your slick game and played with her youth, unashamed of the way you lied, played with the truth

She never knew what hit her
Steal her honey, then forget her. A rose, she wears a flower tryin' to forget about you

'Cause a rose is still a rose
Baby girl, you're still a flower
He can't lead you and then take you, make you and then break you. Darlin', you hold the power

Now believe me when I tell you that I've been hurt myself when he tells you that he loves you and sees nobody else

And now you're so tough tryin' to wear tight clothes and things tossin' and flossin' tryin' to fill the void heartbreak brings

Oh yeah, when she faces the mirror she's cryin', you can't hear her. Now the rose is still a rose. She wears a flower, tryin' to forget about you

Let your life be in the sunshine
Not the darkness of your sorrow
You may see you're all today
When you know it'll come tomorrow

Tough to be, but life ain't over. Just because your man is gone. Girl, love yourself and love to love 'cause without him your life goes on

---

**Against All Odds (Take A Look At Me Now) (Phil Collins)**

How can I just let you walk away, just let you leave without a trace when I stand here taking every breath with you. You're the only one who really knew me at all

How can you just walk away from me when all I can do is watch you leave. Cause we've shared the laughter and the pain and even shared the tears

You're the only one who really knew me at all

So take a look at me now, there's just an empty space
And there's nothing left here to remind me, just the memory of your face

Take a look at me now, there's just an empty space
And you coming back to me is against the odds and that's what I've got to face

I wish I could just make you turn around and see me cry
There's so much I need to say to you, so many reasons why you're the only one who really knew me at all

But to wait for you, is all I can do and that's what I've got to face. Take a good look at me now, cause I'll still be standing here and you coming back to me is against all odds it's the chance I've gotta take.
Take a look at me now

---

**Ain't Got Far To Go (Jess Glynne)**

Birds fly, we turned finally free. Patience lost, I began to lose me. My advice would be take a breath, close your eyes and take a step

I wasn't scared, I fought this on my own. You pulled me down and I let you go.
I told you I would prove you wrong and now I'm here and I'm standing strong.
I know that I ain't got far to go cause I spent forever waiting and it's no longer a dream and now I've landed on my feet and I ain't got far to go

Hold tight, rollercoaster, here we go, Florida, Orlando, I ain't playing with you. Day one, I said I'd go for me
One box ticked, got a lot to beat

Cause I spent forever waiting
And it's no longer a dream
And now I've landed on my feet. And I ain't got far to go

I'm here to stay, I'm here to stay. Amen
And if I had to go back in time I would just do it again
I ain't got far to go. I know, I ain't got far to go

---

**Alive (P.O.D.)**

Every day is a new day
I'm thankful for every breath I take. I won't take it for granted so I learn from my mistakes. It's beyond my control, sometimes it's best to let go whatever happens in this lifetime. I trust in love.
You have given me peace of mind. I feel so alive for the very first time. I can't deny you. I feel so alive for the very first time
And I think I can fly
Sunshine upon my face
A new song for me to sing
Tell the world how I feel inside even though it might cost me everything
Now that I know this, so beyond, I can't hold this
I can never turn my back away now that I've seen you
I can never look away

---

**All Around Me (Flyleaf)**

My hands are searching for you. My arms are outstretched towards you.
I feel you on my fingertips
My tongue dances behind my lips for you

This fire rising through my being. Burning, I'm not used to seeing you. I'm alive.

I can feel you all around me
Thickening the air I'm breathing, holding on to what I'm feeling, savoring this heart that's healing

My hands float up above me
And you whisper you love me and I begin to fade
Into our secret place

The music makes me sway
The angels singing say we are alone with you
I am alone and they are too with you. I'm alive

I can feel you all around me
Thickening the air I'm breathing; holding on to what I'm feeling, savoring this heart that's healing

So I cry Holy,
The light is white, Holy
And I see you I'm alive
Take my hand
I give it to you
Now you own me, all I am
You said you would never leave me, I believe you
I believe

---

**Alyssa Lies (Jason Michael Carroll)**

My little girl met a new friend
Just the other day on the playground at school between the tires and the swings but she came home

with tear-filled eyes and she said to me "Daddy, Alyssa Lies"

I just brushed it off at first cause I didn't know how much my little girl had been hurt or the things she had seen. I wasn't ready when I said you can tell me and she said Alyssa Lies to the classroom. Alyssa lies every day at school. Alyssa lies to the teachersa s she tries to cover every bruise

My little girl laid her head down that night to go to sleep as I stepped out the room I heard her say a prayer so soft and sweet. God bless my mom and my dad and my new friend Alyssa. I know she needs you bad

I had the worst night of sleep in years as I tried to think of a way to calm her fears. I knew exactly what I had to do but when we got to school on Monday I heard the news.

My little girl asked me why everybody looked so sad
The lump in my throat grew bigger with every question that she asked until I felt the tears run down my face
And I told her that Alyssa wouldn't be at school today

She doesn't lie in the classroom. She doesn't lie anymore at school. Alyssa lies with Jesus because there's nothing anyone would do

Tears filled my eyes, when my little girl asked me why Alyssa lies. Daddy tell me why Alyssa lies

---

**As (Stevie Wonder)**

As around the sun the earth knows she's revolving
And the rosebuds know to bloom in early May
Just as hate knows love's the cure you can rest your mind

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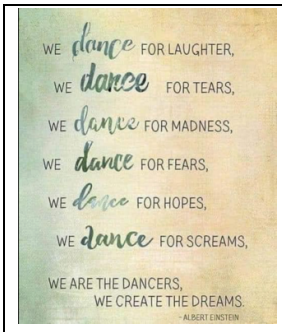
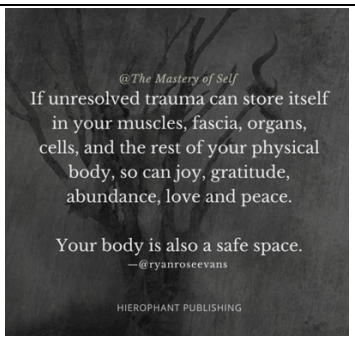
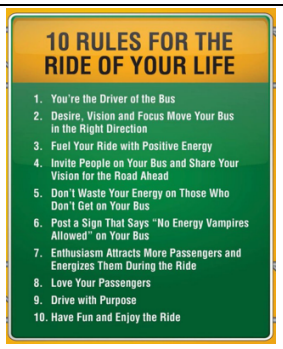
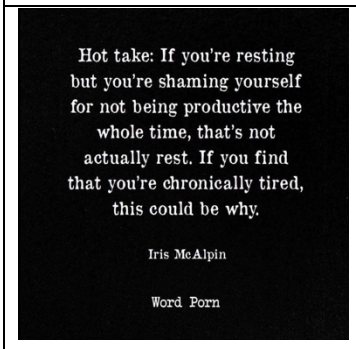
## WATERING SESSIONS

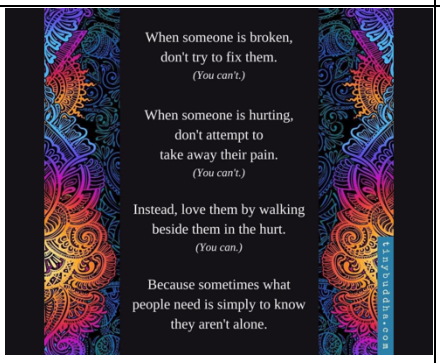
# MEMES

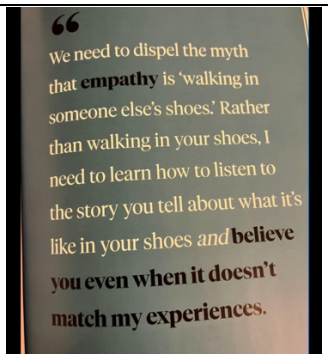


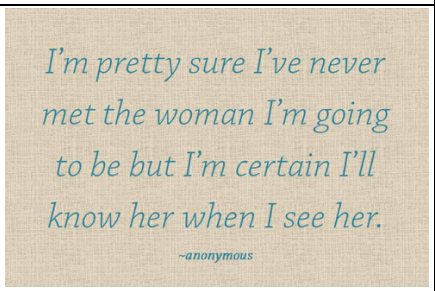



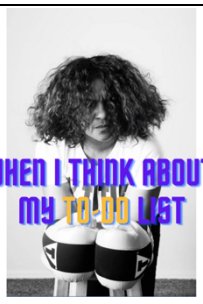





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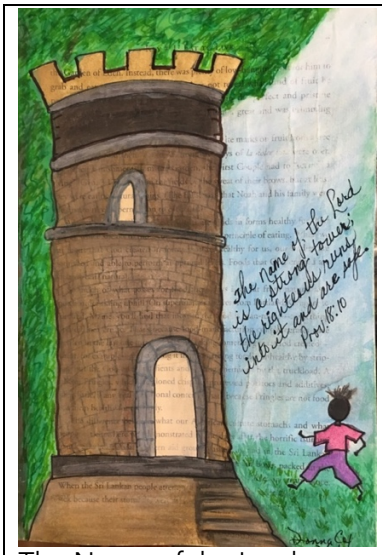
## WATERING SESSIONS

# PAINTINGS

**These are all original paintings created by Rev. Dr. Donna M. Cox**




The Name of the Lord

Proverbs 31

Beautiful In Brokenness

Beautiful Feet

Come Out of Hiding

Come Deeper

Lie Down

Rest

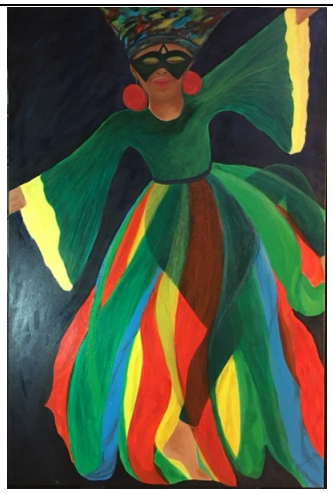
Calm

Joyful Grace

The Lioness

Let It Go

Dancing Day



Dancing In The Dark

Friends

Radiant Joy

Sisters, Friends

Power Position

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## WATERING SESSIONS

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Many resources for Spiritual Practices

are located on Pinterest at

**https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/the-watering-place/**

**https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/spirit-growth/**

**https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/ministry-resources/**

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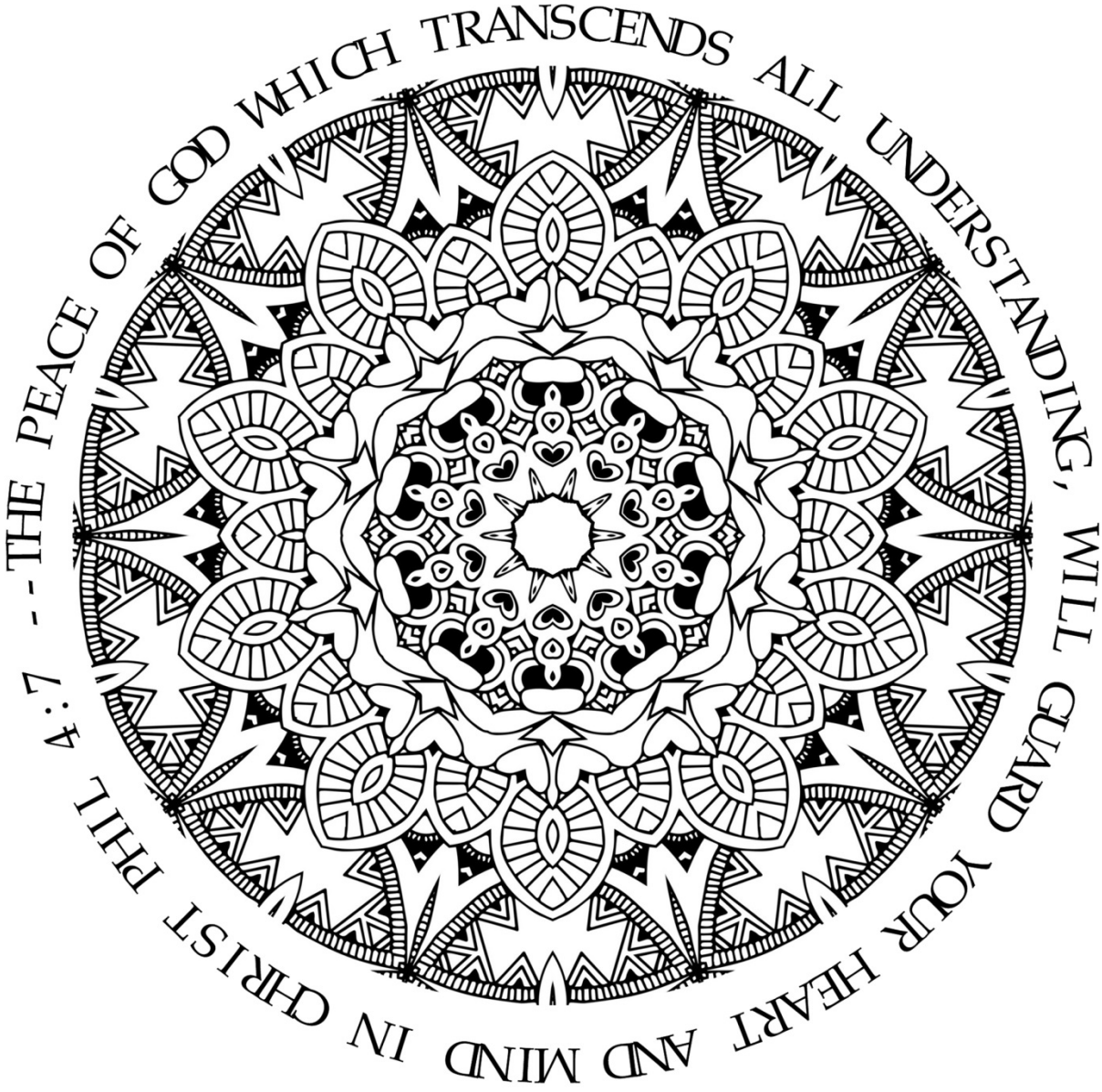
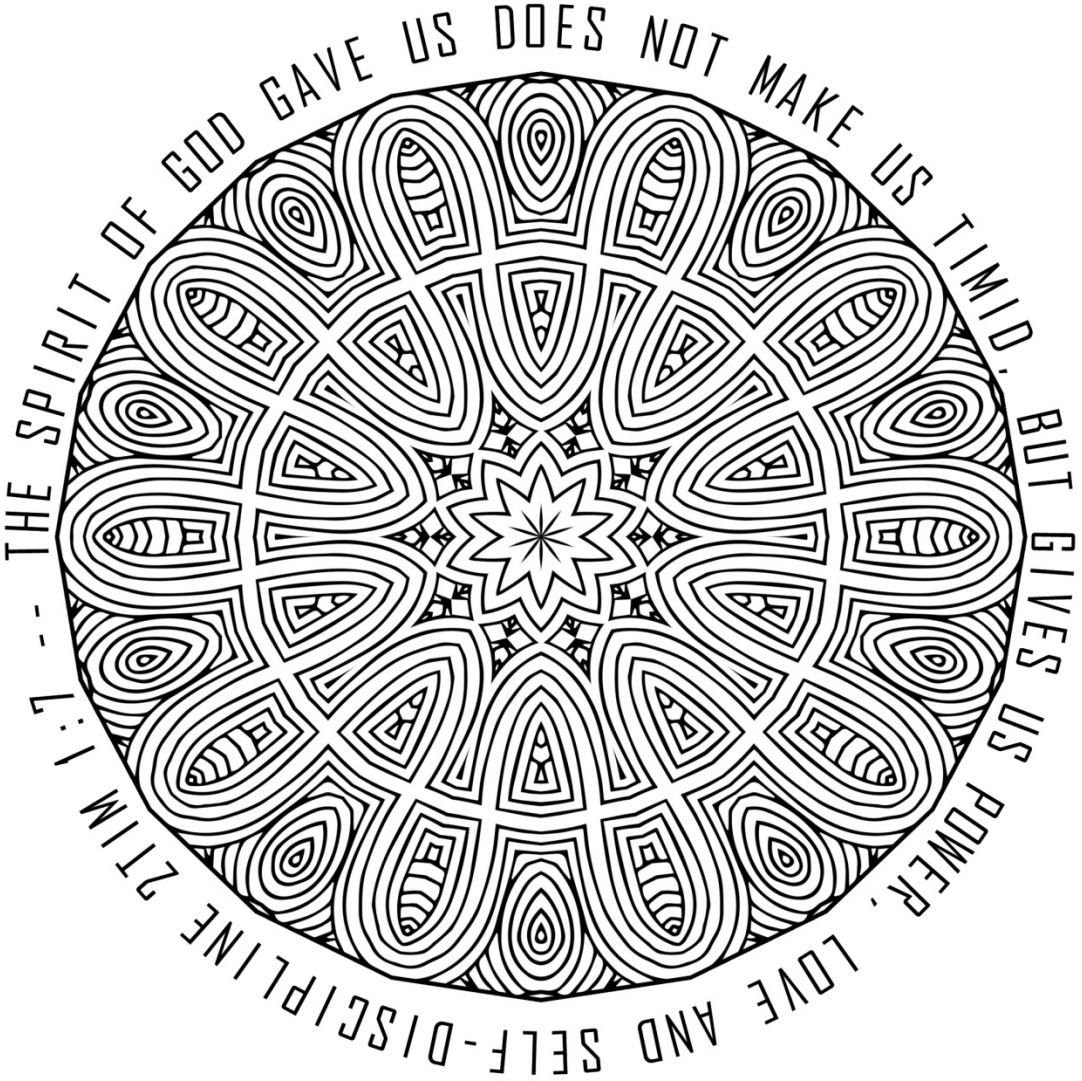
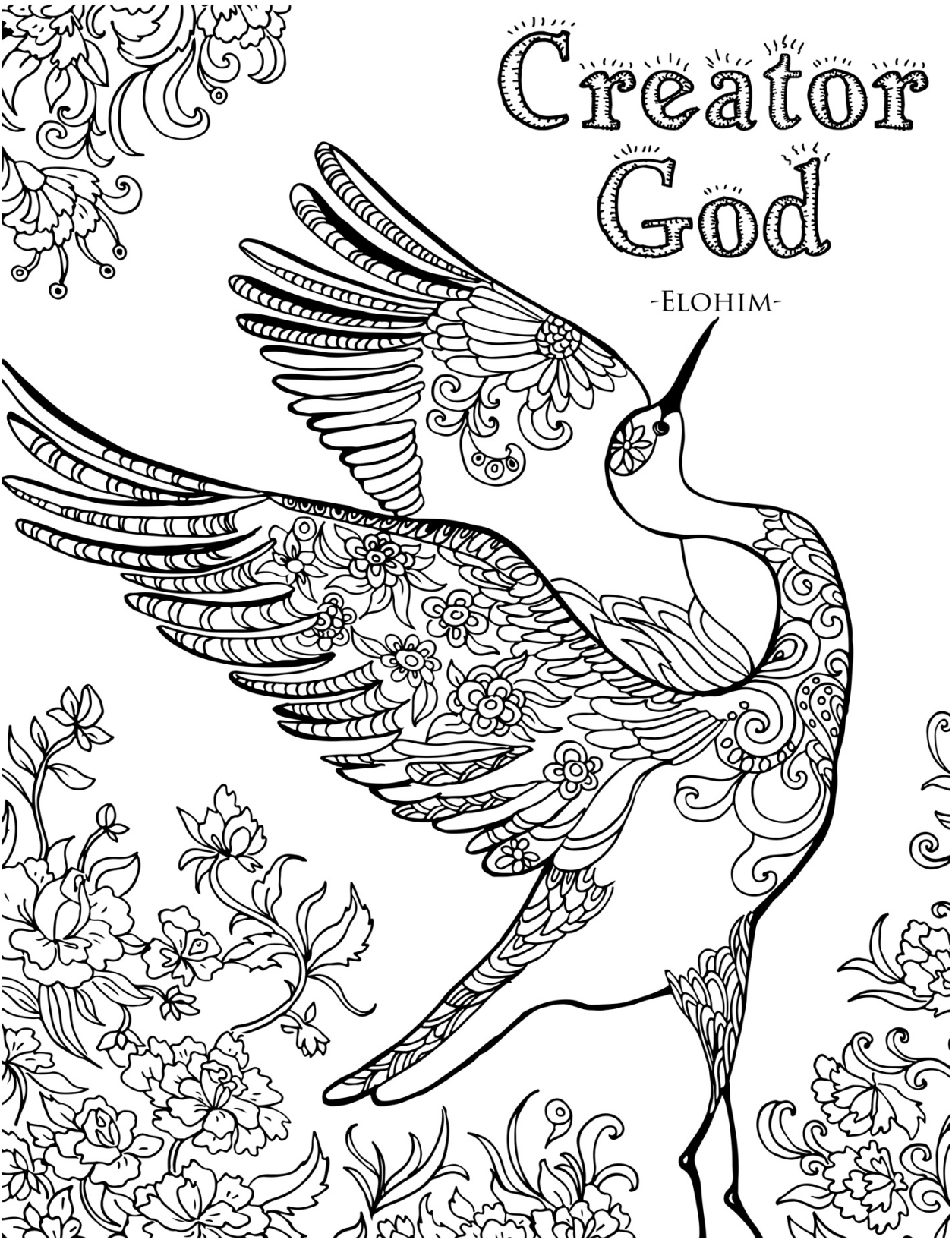
## WATERING SESSIONS

# COLORING PAGES


THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEART AND MIND IN CHRIST PHIL 4:7 --


THE SPIRIT OF GOD GAVE US DOES NOT MAKE US TIMID. BUT GIVES US POWER. LOVE AND SELF-DISCIPLINE 2TIM 1:7 --


Creator
God
-Elohim-

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## WATERING SESSIONS

# WRITTEN RESOURCES

# The discipline of silence

## Practical guidelines

1. Discipline yourself to be silent for 15-30 minutes. Quiet your heart and mind. Just be still and sit quietly before God. Allow God to fill your whole being.
2. Keep a notebook handy because it does sometimes happen that you keep on thinking about things you must do later; you can then jot these down so that you don't forget. Soon you will stop thinking about these 'urgent matters' that need your attention, and your mind will quiet down.
3. Give all your desires, worries and burdens to God one by one until your heart is quiet and unconcerned before the Lord. Spend a couple of minutes on this.
4. The purpose of this time of silence is not to write, to read the Bible or listen to music. Just sit quietly with the Lord. It is not in the first place to try to listen if God is saying something to you. Should you however, sense that He is speaking to you, write down what you experience Him saying to you and become silent again. This silence is simply for sitting quietly in the presence of God.
5. After the time of silence you may take your journal and write down your experience, emotions, frustrations and thoughts on this time. As the week progresses you will see how your thoughts and emotions grow and change.
6. You are brought to a standstill during these silences and this usually breaks the influence of stress on your life. It allows you to reflect on what you are busy with and it is also a good time to ask yourself this question: What was the effect of silence on my life? After experiencing the power of silence, what should change in my life?

## A short study on the discipline of silence

There is a time for everything... A time to be silent and a time to speak (Eccl.3:7) In our modern world with its continuous noise, the disciples of the Lord Jesus have to re-discover the discipline of silence. Without regular and prolonged times of silence where we silently wait upon the Lord and allow silence to work in us, we will not be able to remain standing against the flood of words that submerge us, the opinions of people, the power of the world and the attacks of the evil one.

Silence is necessary to shut out all other voices so that we can hear God's voice. Many voices talk to us all day long: newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, posters, e-mail, the Internet; the voices of people's opinions, those in authority, preachers, books we read, our own ambitions and dreams, desires and passions. There are voices from the past: my father's voice thundering in my ears when I want to do something wrong, a teacher's reprimand, the example of a friend. There are the voices of culture, of traditions, of the community we live in who want to prescribe and decide how we should live. In the silence we learn to know the voice of the Shepherd. Jesus says: My sheep know my voice. How many of us know His voice? Can we distinguish it from all the other voices in the world?

Silence can be frightening. It is in silence that I realise it is only God and I. In silence I am confronted with my own emptiness, insignificance and finiteness...and with God.

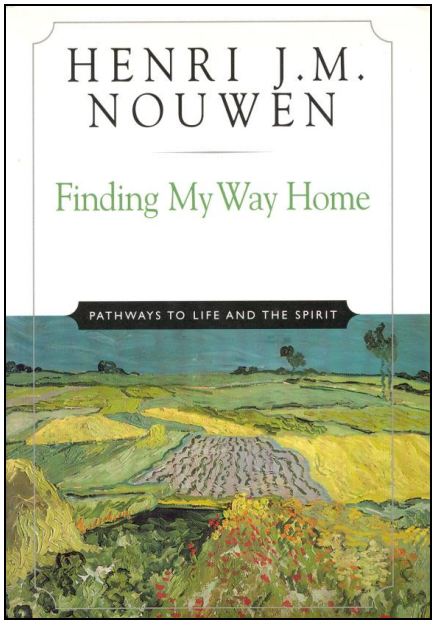
**The complete document is in the digital folder**

# Finding My Way Home

PATHWAYS TO LIFE AND THE SPIRIT

Henri J.M. Nouwen

**Discussion Questions for Nouwen Reading Groups**
**Five week Program**

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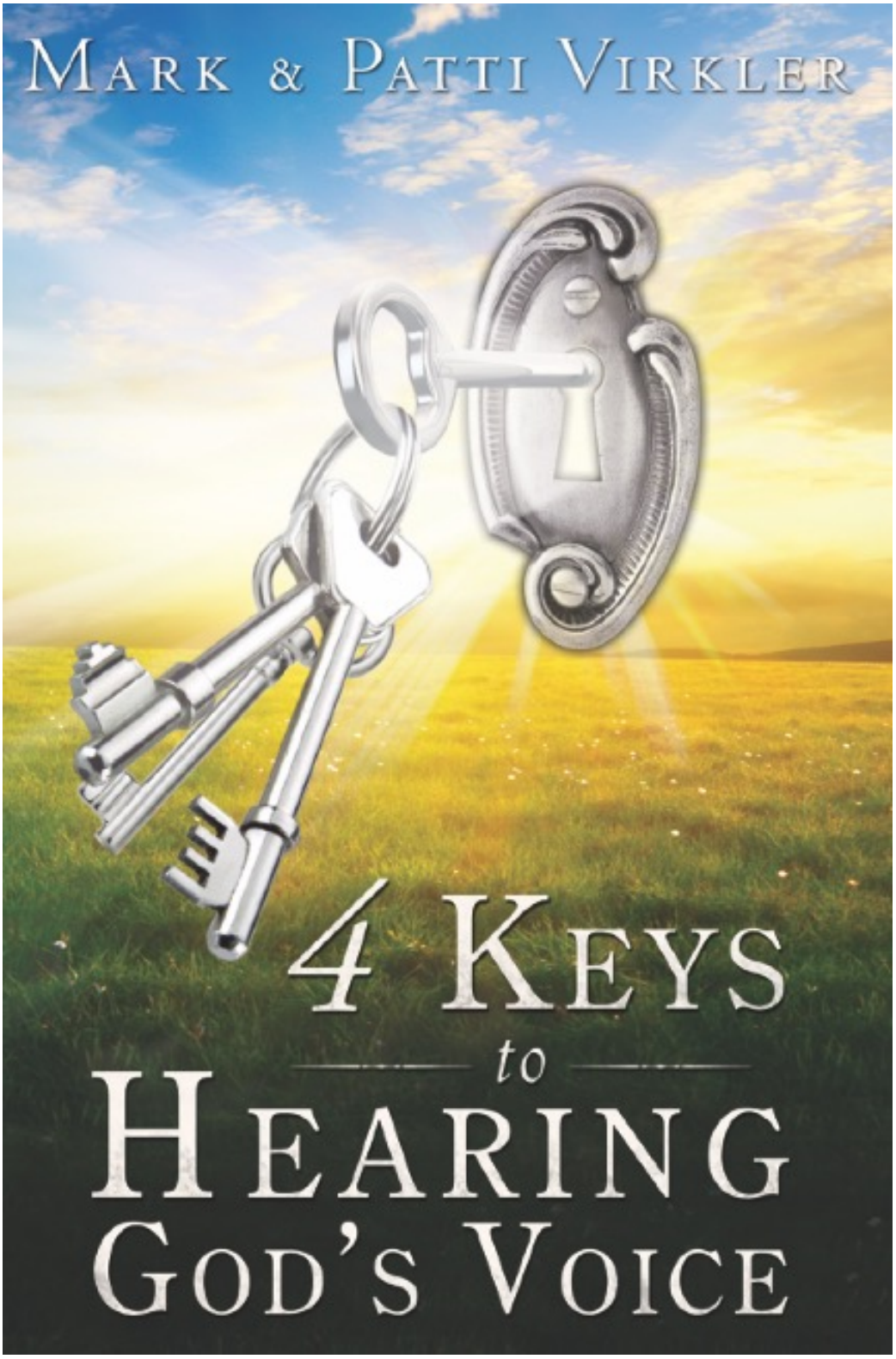


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# Journal Prompts for the Liminal Space

by Heather Plett

## A. Liminal Space

*"Liminal space is a period in which something— social hierarchy, culture, belief, tradition, identity, etc.—has been dissolved and a new thing has not yet emerged to take its place. It's that period of uncertainty, ambiguity, restlessness, fear, discomfort, and anguish. It's the space between, when a trapeze artist lets go of one bar and doesn't yet know whether they will be able to catch the other bar." – Heather Plett, The Art of Holding Space: A Practice of Love, Liberation, and Leadership*

1. What is liminal in your life right now? What feels uncertain about your future?
2. How does liminal feel in your body? Move around as you consider the word and notice how your body holds it.
3. What have you let go of or moved away from?
4. What felt secure in the past but no longer feels secure?
5. What are you still clinging to from the past?
6. What are you happy to release from the past?
7. What are you grieving? How is grief living in your body?
8. Write a list of the emotions that have been emerging during this liminal space. (You can incorporate an art practice by assigning each emotion a colour and doing a finger painting with those colours.)
9. Are there relationships that will change as a result of this liminal space you're in? How do you feel about that?
10. Do you feel safe in this liminal space? Why or why not? What might help you feel safer?
11. One of my favourite mantras, which I try hard to embrace when I'm in liminal space, is "The outcome is not my responsibility." Say that mantra a few times to yourself and notice how it feels to say it. Write about how that feels.
12. Find a piece of music that represents liminal space. (Some of my favourites are Nothing Stays the Same, by Luke Sital-Singh; Carry On, by The Fortunate Ones; Change of Time, by Josh Ritter; Unsettled, by Justin Rutledge; and The Darkness, by Rose Cousins.) Listen to it and then write about the thoughts and feelings it evokes.
13. What is possible if you surrender to this moment?
14. What stories from the past might this liminal space be inviting you to let go of and/or rewrite?



**The complete document is in the digital folder.**

The Watering Place

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## WATERING SESSIONS

# WATERING SESSIONS

## Process:

1. Sit with your eyes closed and listen to *Holding Space* written and performed by Crys Matthews
2. As you listen for the second time, circle any words or phrases that capture your attention. Jot thoughts or images in the margins. Do not censor your thoughts. Allow them to flow freely as you allow the music to flow over and in you.
3. Sit for a moment with your thoughts in silence.

**Holding Space**

Crys Matthews
https://www.reverbnation.com/crysmatthews/song/23443654-holding-space

It ain't over til it's over,
not even when this August comes and goes
and I'm waving over my shoulder.
40 years are said and done,
and truly we were the lucky ones.
And as long as I've got the memories
I can keep each of you with me
from the sisters up in Baltimore
to way down south in Ecuador
And across oceans, across the seas
I'll be holding space for you like it
was held for me.

It takes way more than one locked gate
to make a 40-year legacy dissipate
and if it runs as deep as this one does
it's in our bones, it's in our blood.
Wooo sisters, don't you cry.
This is just so long for now.
This is not goodbye.

Well it ain't over til it's over,
not even when those gates are
closed for good and I'm
crying on your shoulders.
In every state in this great land
you'll find sweet memories of Michigan
like two strangers holding hands singing
"Amazon womyn gonna rise again"
like the Gaia girls, the silver ferns,
the drum songs, the singing,
and the lessons learned.
When womyn gather be it few or many
somebody's holding space for you
like it was held for me.

It takes way more than one locked gate
to make a 40-year legacy dissipate
and if it runs as deep as this one does
it's in our bones, it's in our blood.
Wooo sisters, don't you cry.
This is just so long for now.
This is not goodbye.

## Watering

You are invited to reflect on one or all of the following questions. If others come to mind, feel free to reflect on those instead. Write any thoughts, actions, revelations, or prayers that come to mind.

- What images come to mind as you read the lyrics?
- In what ways do the lyrics and the performance match or disconnect?
- Where do you see yourself in this song?
- Does anyone or a situation come to mind as you reflect on the song?

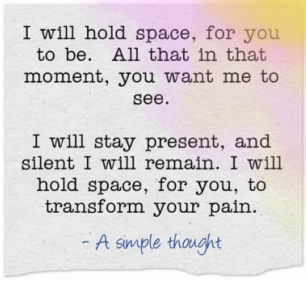
## Holding Space:

Using any craft or journaling materials, think of ways you might express what it means to hold space for yourself and others. Consider writing a poem, create a collage, journal, creating a play list of other songs that remind you to actively hold space. You are a creative being.... so.... create. Judgments are not allowed!

## Wading In:

Share your creations with the sister circle. Remember, this is a safe space and we applaud and encourage all efforts.

## Watering Session Closure:



There are two rules for grandfather clocks:

1. Don't let the clock wind down.

2. Don't let the clock get wound too tight.

## Watering:

**Using the two rules for the grandfather clock as a metaphor for your life, how have you violated or kept these rules?**

**Write a poem, draw a picture, create a song or dance, or journal about your reflection.**

# Let It Fall

## Process

**1. Sit with your eyes closed and listen to Let It Fall performed by Highlands Worship.**
**2. As you listen for the second time, circle any words or phrases that capture your attention. Jot thoughts or images in the margins. Do not censor your thoughts. Allow them to flow freely as you allow the music to flow over and in you.**
**3. Sit for a moment with your thoughts in silence.**

Let the glory of our God fall in this place
Let the glory of our King fall in this place
Let the glory of our Savior fall in this place
Let it fall

Fall like rain on dry and desperate places
Like a flood upon our thirsty hearts
Lord, we long to worship in Your presence
Spirit come, Holy Spirit, come

Let the spirit of our God move in this place
Let the presence of our King move in this place
Let the power of our Savior move in this place
Let it fall, let it fall

Fall like rain on dry and desperate places
Like a flood upon our thirsty hearts
Lord, we long to worship in Your presence
Spirit come, Holy Spirit, come

## WATERING

**You are invited to choose one of the following questions and write any thoughts, revelations, actions, or prayers that come to mind as you reflect on this song.**

## Live in the questions.

**What questions does this song pose?**

- How can I let go of a loss with dignity and grace?
- What can I let go of that does not serve me or others?
- What new small pleasures might I experience today?
- How can I keep an expectant, peaceful heart?
- How can I pay attention to what is essential today?

## Prophetic prayer

*Be still and know that I Am your God. Come into the quiet place. Sit down there with Me. I will counsel you, instruct you, give you peace and assure you of My faithfulness. You will find all you need, if you but come and spend some time with Me. I will fulfill the promises and release the provision. You will know if there are things you need to leave behind, so you can possess the future. You will defeat the giants. You will see victory because of faith in My power to do what seems impossible. Come then, My friend, pursue success. My plans for you are very, very good.*

## Holding Space

Find a quiet corner and sit quietly with the song and your notes. You might want to go for a walk instead. Either way, wait in the expectation that God has something special to say to you. Just soak in what you hear in your spirit.

## Watering Session Closure:

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Share any revelations from your quiet time.

**Jesus' Invitation to Rest**
Matt. 11:28

**Read together, slowly.**
**Read silently and let the words flow through you.**
**Repeat until you ACCEPT THE INVITATION.**

Breathe & Pause

**Come to me, all you who are weary**
**and are carrying heavy burdens,**
**and I will give you rest.**

Breathe & Pause

**Come to me, all you who are weary**
**and are carrying heavy burdens**

Breathe & Pause

**Come to me, all you who are weary**

Breathe & Pause

**Come to me**

Breathe & Pause

**Come**

**Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been [sown], I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders.**

*Henry David Thoreau*

## Watering Session:

- Give each person a small flower pot with soil.
- Allow time for people to decorate their pot if they prefer.
- Allow each to choose the seeds they want to sow.
- What do the seeds represent beyond the 'natural?' How would you name them?
- Allow time for each to plant and water their seeds.
- Reflect on the process of decorating and choosing seeds.
- Reflect on naming the seeds.
- Consider the ways the plant can serve as a manifestation of Thoreau's vision through journaling, drawing, or in the way that best suits the person.

## Holding Space:

Gather in small groups to discuss the process and any revelations.

## Watering Session Closure:

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Discuss how it felt to process your life in this way and how it felt to be able to share your stepping stones without judgment.

Sermon: Water The Seed, T. D. Jakes
https://youtu.be/4wIlw75Id7s

## Psalm 139:7-12 NLT

7 I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!

8 If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave,[a] you are there.

9 If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

10 even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.

11 I could ask the darkness to hide me
and the light around me to become night

12 but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.
To you, the night shines as bright as day.
Darkness and light are the same to you.

## Process

- Read the verses several times at different speeds.
- Allow the words to sound in your body and mind.
- Circle words or phrases that stand out.
- Look for the promises.
- Look for the places you might have difficulty applying to you.

## Holding Space:

Gather in small groups to discuss the process and any revelations.

## Watering Session Closure:

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Share any last thoughts or revelations.

# Redrawing Your Life

## Process:

1. Write your name on the back of your paper.
2. Choosing from the craft supplies, draw a shape on your paper in any color you'd like. It can be as simple or as detailed a shape as you prefer.
3. Pass your paper to the person on your left.
4. Add a design or color to that person's paper.
5. Continue passing the papers around the circle until yours returns to you.

## Watering:

- Examine your paper. What about it do you really like? What seems to be 'wrong?' Why? How does it make you feel? Turn the drawing so that you look at it from all four directions.
- Journal about what you see as you look at what you got back.
- Make any "corrections" to your picture you believe to be necessary. Use markers and crayon to rework your picture into something that better reflects you. You can also decide to create an entirely NEW picture if you would like. The choice is yours.
- When you are satisfied, move on to the next watering section.

## More Watering:

- Think about a song that matches the finished product.
- Feel free to move to another space where you can quietly play the song on your phone.
- Journal about the entire process.

## Holding Space:

- Regather in the sister circle. Share your finished piece of art and the song you selected.
- Share why you selected a particular song.
- Play 1-2 minutes of the song as we hold space for you.

## Watering Session Closure:

# Save The Girl

## Process:

1. Sit with your eyes closed and listen to Save the Hero performed by Beyoncé.
2. As you listen for the second time, circle any words or phrases that capture your attention. Jot thoughts or images in the margins. Do not censor your thoughts. Allow them to flow freely as you allow the music to flow over and in you.
3. Sit for a moment with your thoughts in silence.

### Save The Girl

James Scheffer / Beyonce Knowles / Richard Preston Butler / Ali Tamposi

I lay alone awake at night Sorrow fills my eyes
But I'm not strong enough to cry
Despite of my disguise I'm left with no shoulder
But everybody wants to lean on me I guess I'm their soldier
But who's gonna be mine?
Who's there to save the hero when she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help? Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl after she saves the world?
I bottle all my hurt inside I guess
I'm living a lie Inside my mind each day I die
What can bring me back to life? A simple word, a gesture
Someone to say you're beautiful
Come find this buried treasure
Rainbows lead to a pot of gold
Who's there to save the hero when she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help? Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl after she saves the world
I've given too much of myself and now it's driving me crazy (I'm crying out for help) Sometimes I wish someone would just come here and save me
Save me from myself
Who's there to save the hero when she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help? Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl After she saves the world

## Holding Space:

Gather in small groups to discuss the process and any revelations.

## Wading In:

Read Nadeja Jones' blog post, *Stop Calling Me Strong*.

I sit in my room sometimes in complete silence, complete darkness and just cry. I cry to release all the things I do not or cannot say.

I am a "strong" Black woman. While the people I surround myself with are wonderful and supportive, it doesn't change that internalized feeling of shame I feel. That feeling that someone is thinking less of me for being a woman with emotions.

I have to be strong. I have to be strong for everyone else.
It reminds me so much of a song I love (which coincidentally ALWAYS makes me cry). Have you ever listened to Beyoncé's "Save The Hero"? If you haven't, do it; that song is Black women all over the world. We are constantly "holding it down" so much so that we are burying ourselves. We are drowning, and yet we still pull people to the raft. But we are left alone. We are dying.

Think about the Black women in your life. How often do they rest? Do they even rest? Do they sit still? On weekends when there is nothing to do, do they always find something to do? Have you ever seen them cry freely? If you have, what did you think?

Black women go to work in emotional, mental and even physical pain and we keep smiling. We cry in bathrooms because our tears, our pain is already invisible to most. When we come home we're exhausted but we have to still pretend because we are "strong." We do anything other than take care of ourselves. We are not the priority.

I, a Black woman, do not cry in public. I've held back tears at least 85 percent of my adult life. I do not cry in front of people unless it is socially acceptable, funerals for example. Why? Because I am conditioned to feel that crying is weakness. I had to learn to give myself permission to cry. I had to learn to give myself permission to do something I see people due on cue, because my Black woman tears are unfamiliar.

A Black woman will “I’m fine” you to death. Why? Because are you really going to listen?
We are so familiar with not being heard that we stop talking.

At this point you take our silence for strength because we always keep going. We are taught to handle everything. We are taught that tears are a sign of weakness, of fragility. However, the truth is there is so much power in the release. There is so much healing in letting those learned oppressive emotions go. The strength comes when we stop hiding ourselves.

Let’s leave the “You should have said something” performances in the past. How many times do others silence us? How often are our voices eclipsed by someone else’s privilege? Has a Black woman’s needs been overlooked by your own? We as Black women are holding the literal weight of the world. We carry it everyday, and this shit is heavy.

Stop calling me “strong” as a way of describing me. I am so much more. WE are so much more. Check in on the Black women in your life. Understand that we are scared. We are vulnerable.

We are HUMAN and WE ARE TIRED.

## Watering Session Closure:

What connections can be drawn between Beyonce's song and Ms. Jones' blog post?  Are there any intersections or overlaps between your experiences and thoughts with these two works?

# Stepping Stones

The Watering Place

This activity gives us an opportunity to look at our gifts and life experiences in a way that might provide a different vantage point from which to view our lives and our vocation. This activity is an opportunity to investigate threads and detours of the journey, the path that has brought us to this moment.

### PROCESS: 30 MINUTES

- Take some time to jot down 5 or 6 "stepping stones" that have helped to shape your journey. In identifying stepping stones, we are referring to those events that come to mind when we reflect on the course that our life and work have taken. Stepping stones are those **critical events, decisions, people, or experiences** that have shaped who you are today. They may be memories, part of your family and culture, sounds, sights, smells, or words that represent or symbolize a part of who you are; or they may mark a change in direction or even an idea or insight that gave you a new understanding of yourself in relation to your life and work. Stepping stones in our lives may have been positive and life-affirming, or they may have been difficult or painful.
- Feel free to use any art supplies and the provided paper or use your journal to draw the stepping stones or to make a map or path that represents your journey.
- After you are satisfied with the stepping stones you have identified, write a sentence or two about each that captures something about its significance.

### Watering

- Observe the flow of choices and events, directions, and detours that your work, life, or vocation has taken.
- Notice if any common threads run through these stepping stones.
- Notice which ones came about because of someone outside of yourself recognizing your gifts and abilities and encouraging you to use them in a certain way.
- Notice if any came about through adversity or a painful experience.
- Notice if your stepping stones resulted from you claiming your own essential gifts, identity, and integrity which then drew you in a different direction or helped you to make a course correction.

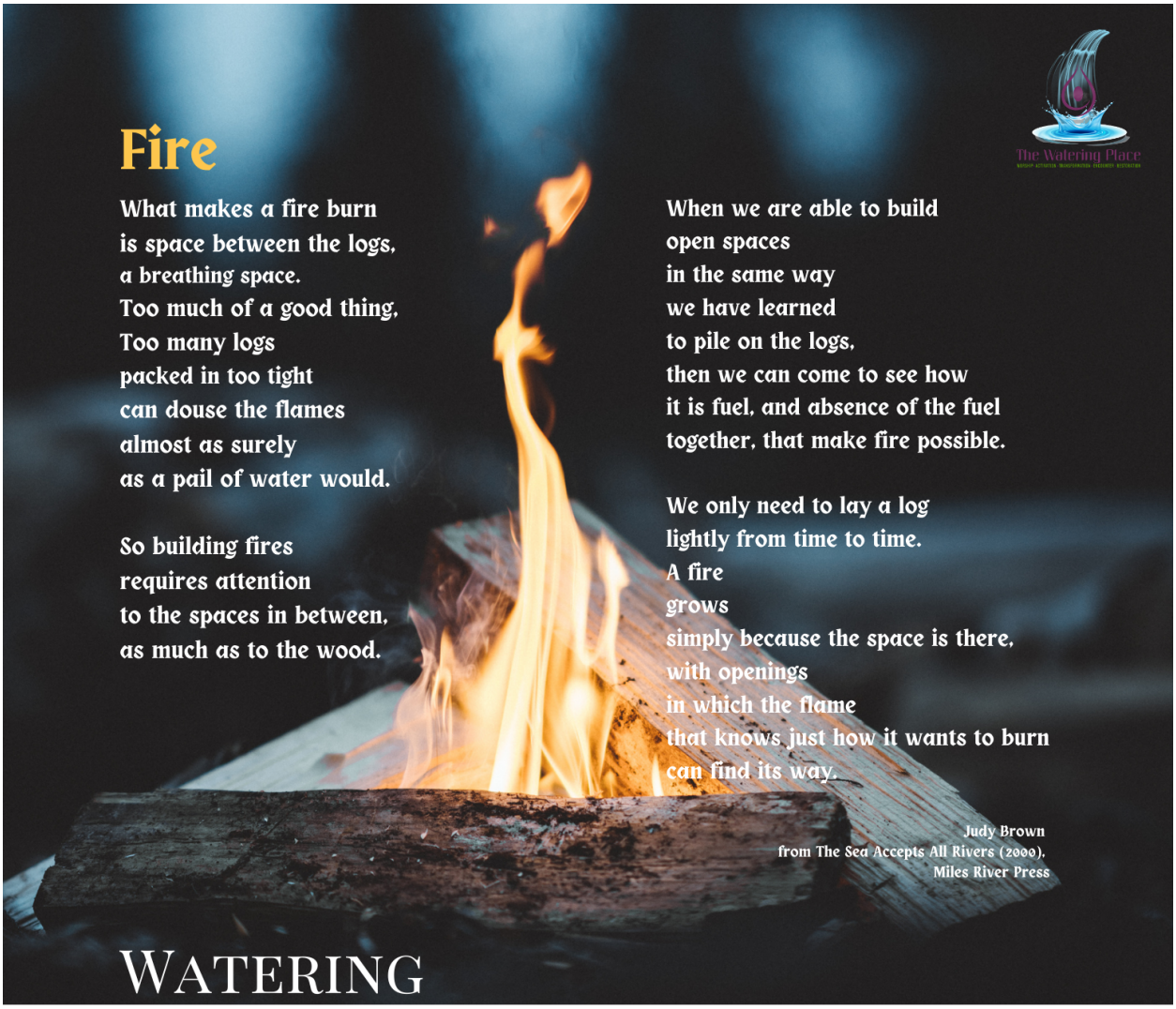
### HOLDING SPACE: 45 MINUTES

- Find three (3) other women to make a group of four. In your small group, one at a time, (re)introduce yourselves.
- Share the stepping stones you feel comfortable sharing. Remember, you can say of any stepping stone, "I think I'll pass on this one." (10 minutes per person)
  - Only one person talks at a time. The others hold space through active listening.
  - Be sure to listen completely without commenting or responding to each story.

### WATERING SESSION CLOSURE: 15

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Discuss how it felt to process your life in this way and how it felt to be able to share your stepping stones without judgment.

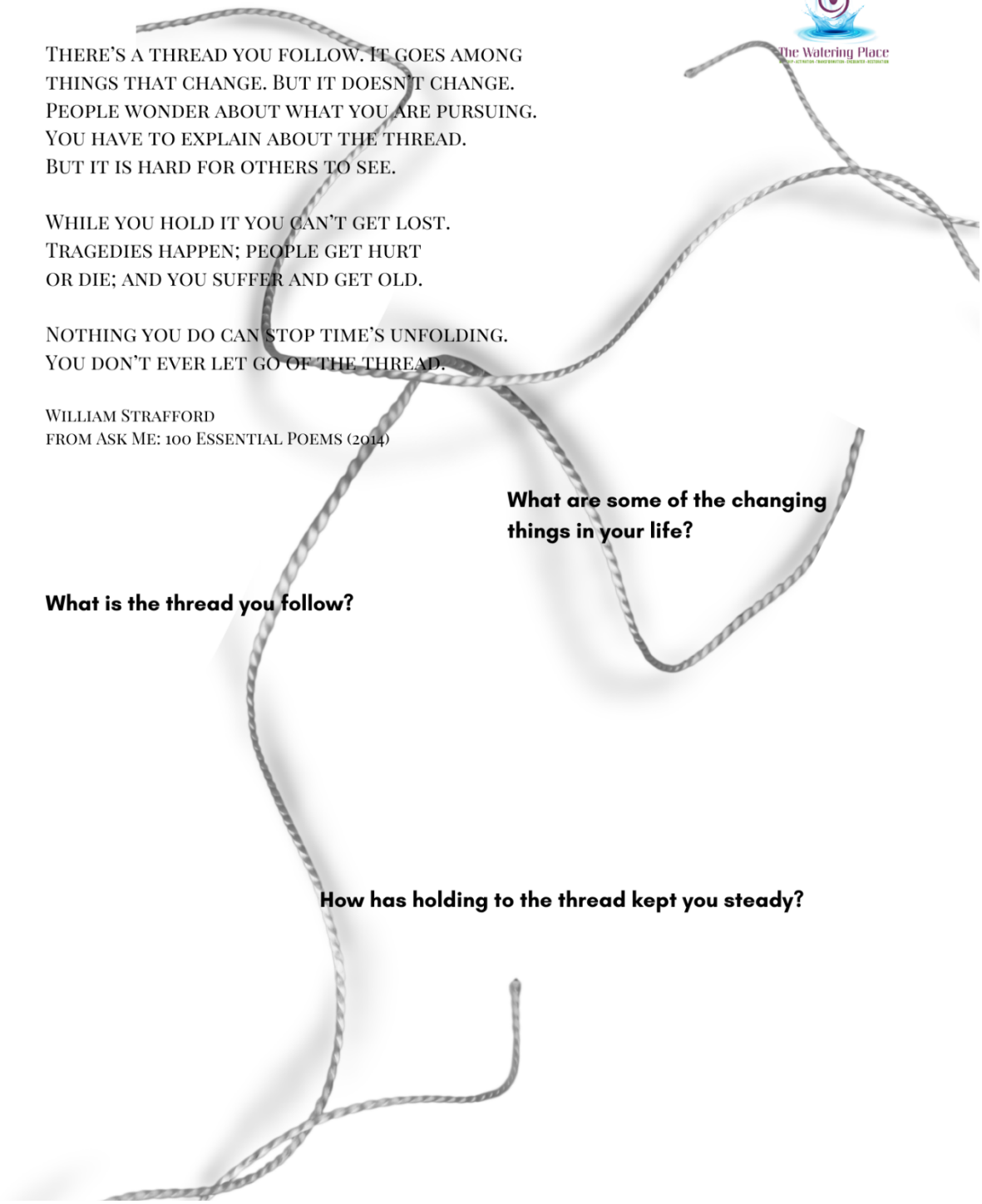
*Everything that happens to you is your teacher. The secret is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life and be taught by it. Polly Berends*




**You are invited to choose one of the following questions and write down any thoughts, revelations, actions, or prayers that come to mind as you reflect on this poem.**

- **What do you need to have your fire burn most effectively?**
- **Where in your life do you sense the possibility for more breathing space?**
- **Does "too much of a good thing" speak to you? In what way?**
- **How are you experiencing the balance of creating open spaces and piling on logs?**

# The Way It Is



There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.

While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.

Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

William Strafford
from Ask Me: 100 Essential Poems (2014)

**What are some of the changing things in your life?**

**What is the thread you follow?**

**How has holding to the thread kept you steady?**

## Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You

I wanted you more
than you ever will know
so I sent love to follow
wherever you go.
It's high as you wish it. It's quick as an elf.
You'll never outgrow it...it stretches itself!

So climb any mountain...
climb up to the sky!
My love will find you.
My love can fly!

Make a big splash! Go out on a limb!
My love will find you. My love can swim!

It never gets lost, never fades, never ends...

if you're working...

or playing...

or sitting with friends.

You can dance 'til you're dizzy...

paint 'til you're blue...

There's no place, not one,
that my love can't find you.

And if someday you're lonely,
or someday you're sad,
or you strike out at baseball,
or think you've been bad...

just lift up your face, feel the wind in your hair.
That's me, my sweet baby, my love is right there.

In the green of the grass...in the smell of the sea...
in the clouds floating by...at the top of a tree...
in the sound crickets make at the end of the day...

"You are loved. You are loved. You are loved," they all say.

My love is so high, and so wide and
so deep, it's always right there, even
when you're asleep.

So hold your head high
and don't be afraid
to march to the front
of your own parade.

If you're still my small babe
or you're all the way grown,
my promise to you
is you're never alone.

You are my angel, my darling,
my star...and my love will find you,
wherever you are.

You are loved.

(Nancy Tillman)

## Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You

I wanted you more
than you ever will know
so I sent love to follow
wherever you go.
It's high as you wish it. It's quick as an elf.
You'll never outgrow it...it stretches itself!

So climb any mountain...
climb up to the sky!
My love will find you.
My love can fly!

Make a big splash! Go out on a limb!
My love will find you. My love can swim!

It never gets lost, never fades, never ends...

if you're working...

or playing...

or sitting with friends.

You can dance 'til you're dizzy...

paint 'til you're blue...

There's no place, not one,
that my love can't find you.

And if someday you're lonely,
or someday you're sad,
or you strike out at baseball,
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and don't be afraid
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of your own parade.

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or you're all the way grown,
my promise to you
is you're never alone.

You are my angel, my darling,
my star...and my love will find you,
wherever you are.

You are loved.

(Nancy Tillman)

## Encounter Session PROCESS:

Responses

**Step 1:** Invite Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

**Step 2:** Read through the short story by Nancy Tillman. Pay attention to any phrases or parts that stick out to you. Make notes in the story or in the space to the right.

**Step 3:** Spend time interacting with God by asking questions and listening for answers.

*God's voice, as described by Mark Virkler, sounds like "spontaneous thoughts that light upon my mind as my heart is quiet before the Lord."*

*Holy Spirit may give you pictures, ideas, thoughts, feelings, a sense, a knowing, or memories as you engage. Be fully open. Be surprised.*

# Water:

*And if someday you're lonely*
*Or someday you're sad*
*Or you strike out at baseball,*
*Or think you've been bad...*

*Just lift up your face, feel the wind in your hair.*
*That's me, my sweet baby, my love is right there.*

**God, am I carrying any fear of losing your love or not being good enough? What's the truth? What would you like for me to do with this fear?**

*It's high as you wish it. It's as quick as an elf.*
*You'll never outgrow it.... it stretches itself.*

**God, remind me of a time in my life when I felt really loved by you. Is that love available to me right now?**

*So hold your head high*
*And don't be afraid*
*To march to the front*
*Of your own parade*

**God, is there any area in my life where my head is not high? Is there any part of me that lacks confidence? How do you see me? What do you think of me?**

# Project Launch Plan

# Doctoral Project Description

NPO: In a speedy, frenzied world, women need [a] space to pursue healing, spiritual connection, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

Doctoral Project Plan: The Doctoral Project, *The Watering Place: Creating Space for Spiritually Dehydrated and Hurried Women*, has two parts. Part One is a research-based Handbook that elucidates the need articulated in the NPO statement and the way Doxology Ministries International, Inc. plans to be part of the solution. The Handbook explores the impact issues such as The Hurried Woman Syndrome, and spiritual dehydration has on women's well-being, the importance of creating and holding physically, spiritually, and emotionally safe spaces for oneself and others, and the ability of a variety of modalities, specifically music and art to construct sacred space.

Part Two uses a portfolio format and is a collection of resources and activities, called Watering Sessions, that address the question which lies at the heart of the NPO: *In what ways can issues impacting women, such as the Hurried Woman Syndrome and spiritual dehydration, be addressed in short-term, focused, compassionate communities created when women gather*? The Watering Place Portfolio contains song lyrics, poems, memes, journals, prompts, watering sessions, and helpful resources.

# Audience

Provide a brief description of the ultimate audience for the Doctoral Project and how you plan to engage with them.

There are two target audiences for the Doctoral Project. The first, and primary target audience, is any woman who has either already succumbed to the push and pull of busyness, who finds herself challenged to make time for rest and restoration or any woman who wants to avoid the damages caused by the Hurried Woman or Superwoman Syndromes. In essence, every woman is part of the target market. While I recognize the impossibility of one woman, or one project, meeting the needs of all women, I am confident in the possibility for one person/project to make a positive difference for the women reached. Every gathering of women can create ripples that move beyond the individual person.

The second target audience is currently limited to those who will work with me or whom I will train to lead Watering Sessions.

# Development Plan

| Timeline | Specific Milestone | Key Deliverables | Key Assessment Metric |
|---|---|---|---|
| **March-May 2023** | Host weekly small group in my home | Test Watering Sessions and either update or remove from the Watering Place Portfolio (WPP) | Women who attend the home group indicate, on a survey, a high level of benefit gained (8-10 out of 10) |
| **Summer 2023** | Host at least 3 mini-retreats using WPP | Create new sessions to be added to WPP | Women who attend at least one of the mini-retreats indicate, on a follow-up survey, a high level of benefit gained (8-10 out of 10) |
| **Summer 2023** | Secure Trademark for the Watering Place Concept | Complete the application process for the trademark. | Obtain Trademark status for the Watering Place Concept |
| **Fall 2023** | Develop partnerships | Advertise the concept to organizations that work with women | At least three Invitations to present Watering Sessions in other parts of the community/country during fall 2023 and spring 2024 |
| **Beyond** | Develop partnerships | Search for funding to offset costs of Watering Place gatherings | A list of viable funding resources |
| **Beyond** | See below | | |

# Development Process

**Project Development**

- The ongoing work is to refine and develop Watering Sessions that are engaging, meaningful, and meet the goal of offering women an oasis in their busy schedules. The heart of the Watering Place concept is not to *add* to the burden but to help women see the value of creating spaces for themselves.

- Build The Watering Place website. I already have the domain name and, as mentioned in above, will be trademarking the name/concept.

- Establish a plan for how to engage with women through the Watering Place website.

- Based on my work this semester, I recognize a need to connect with artists tasked with making the world a more beautiful, thoughtful place. To this end, I will begin interviewing and hosting small group think tanks to discuss how they hold space for themselves through their art, how they create space for others, and how they balance the two.

- I plan to host a symposium on the University of Dayton campus engaging music, art, creative writing, and other stakeholders around Holding Space during the 2023-2024 academic year. Information gathered during the symposium will expand the Doctoral Project while adding richness to what I can offer women during Watering Place sessions.

**Personal Development**

- I am a firm believer in professional development. There are several modalities I want to be able to utilize in the Watering Place work. Hence, I plan to pursue the following: Art Practitioners Certification, Reiki Certification, and Sound Healing Therapy training. Likewise, I intend to work more closely with the music therapy program at the University of Dayton.

- Continue to develop as a semiotician, so I am increasingly better at reading the times and telling stories semiotically to inform the ministry better.

# Appendix A– Milestone 1 The NPO Charter

## PERSONAL RESEARCH MANIFESTO

I will continually seek input, read and think broadly, listen carefully to myself, others, and Holy Spirit, and practice self-care.

## NPO STATEMENT

In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

## NPO SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

By the end of the doctoral program, a strategic plan will be developed for space where women can attend to themselves in ways that are (re)generative, healing, and refreshing. The working idea is the establishment of a retreat center. However, I am open to the move of God as I go through the process and will listen intently to those directions. At this point in the development process it is difficult to estimate the exact scope and costs associated with the final product. Extent, boundaries, and costs will be evaluated and incorporated as the process progresses.

## NPO CONTEXT

The NPO project is not aligned with any particular denomination, church, or culture. It does have as it focus adult women and will operate under the auspices of my 501c3 ministry, Doxology Ministries International, Inc. (DMI). DMI is a nondenominational ministry whose mission is to empower people to transform their lives and positively impact families and communities through the application of Biblical principles and practical wisdom. DMI operates as a parachurch ministry, supporting the work of the local church and ministering to the 'unchurched.'

The NPO Workshop and interviews revealed the need for all women, not just 'church' or 'Christian' women, to have a space where they can retreat as well as be offered resources for continual renewal. This makes DMI the logical entity out of which the NPO will operate.

## ROOT CAUSES

The Discovery Workshop and One-x-One interviews were very instructive about the legitimacy of this NPO. We live in a culture that values busyness above nearly everything else. This pervasive value system impacts women in dishonoring ways. First, busyness covers feelings of unworthiness, insecurities, and makes it difficult to fully understand who God created them to be. Second society devalues women; there seems to be an inability to recognize what women bring to the table. As a result, women do not always honor themselves. Instead, they internalize outside voices above their own voices or that of the Creator. Third, When women do not value themselves as God's highest form of creation, they are distracted and barely have time or energy to think about (re)generation,

personal healing, being refreshed. Self becomes such a low priority that women do not have or make time to do things that help them fulfill their purpose.

## DISCOVERY WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDERS

The 16 stakeholders in the Discovery Workshop included teachers/professors, business managers, life coaches, ministers/pastors and retirees ages mid-30s to mid-70s from around the country.

### ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

#1: Senior VP, Black female, 60s.
#2: Academic Center Director, Caucasian female, 60s
#3: Physician, Black female, mid 30s

### 3–5 KEY BIBLICAL TEXTS

During the DMin journey I will carry with me the stories of the women Jesus healed. My NPO presupposes a world filled with healed women who are change agents. Women are powerful, even in our brokenness or need. If my NPO meets its objective, even for a handful of women, it can change the trajectory of, not only the women's lives, but those of everyone they touch.

**Imagine A World of Healed Women**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Luke 8:1-3** | The mention of 'certain women' who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities. |
| **Mark 5:25-34** | The story of the woman with the issue of blood |
| **John 4** | The story of the woman at the well who was freed and became an evangelist |
| **Luke 13:10-17** | The woman who had been bent over for 18 years who Jesus straightened |
| **John 8:1-11** | The woman 'caught in adultery' and brought to Jesus for judgment |

## Appendix A

### Discovery Workshop and One-on-One Interviews Report

### Discovery Workshop Description:

Sixteen women and I assembled via Zoom on Sunday, October 25, 2020 to participate in the Discovery Workshop which followed the process outlined in the workbook. We alternated between full-group and small-group discussions. I used a PowerPoint presentation to anchor the workshop, handouts were sent to women ahead of time, and google docs for in-time summaries. Three women volunteered to lead the break-out room discussions and report back. (Details included in the Appendix, NPO Summary)

Participants included women from early 30s to early 70s; working and retired; Black, White, and Dominican; married, single, and divorced; and one married Lesbian. College students were invited but none participated. They were geographically distanced, from the Dayton area, Tennessee, New Jersey, Florida, Washington D C, and Kentucky. I note that, though not each participant was actually attending church prior to the pandemic, all with the exception of one, spoke from a Christian perspective. This made the one uncomfortable because it brought up earlier hurt over the lack of acceptance by the church. As well, she indicated to me that she had not been prepared for the heteronormative perspective to be so dominant. In retrospect, I realize that the assembled group of women, while diverse in many ways, did not represent non-Christian, lower educated or socio-economic levels. Each person present had at least a bachelor's degree with multiple doctoral degrees represented as well. The women were careful to state that we should not overgeneralize women's experiences and that specific groups would have differing needs.

### Discovery Statement:

**Considering** women, **we've discovered** that women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves **which is caused by** internal and external expectations that fuel busyness.

**If solved, it would mean** more healed women impacting the world.

### Critical Insights from Discovery Workshop:

These are the key insights:

1. Taking time to rest, be quiet, focus/refocus, (re)filled, grieve, remember who she is, or be renewed does not happen organically for women;

2. There is a need for dedicated space and time for women to attend to herself in ways that are (re)generative, healing and refreshing;

3. Life is filled with trauma which is rarely attended to. There is always a "COVID" to deal with (personal or corporate);

4. Women need space for ongoing, perpetual change, not just another experience;

5. Women have many responsibilities, driven by expectations, internal or external, and influenced by roles we play;

6. Life is better for everyone when women are whole and

7. If addressed, women would operate from a place of validation, feel empowered to speak and live their truth, set clearer boundaries, and be more intentional about not operating from an internal deficit.

**One-on-One Interview Discoveries:**

The three women were asked the four questions outlined in the process. The complete summary is in the Appendix. The following are key concepts:

1. All three agreed that, while retreats can be a valuable resource, there is a need for on-going space where women can continually process, refresh, and engage issues.

2. There seems to be a consensus that retreats alone will not satisfy deeper needs that may arise or that are systemic. Chief among these might be trauma healing and the ways retreats may unintentionally leave people more broken if not handled correctly. Thus, it is necessary to figure out how to best address this.

3. The creation of a space for women to gather is multifaceted; there are many issues that must be researched and clarified. This includes establishing the targeted market, associated costs & fee structures, content/offerings, out-reach, and assessment.

**Synthesis:**

The Discovery Workshop was intentionally designed to be free-flowing and idea-generating. Though we had, and kept to, a specific format, conversations naturally flowed into various tributaries. They generated ideas around what retreats might look like, beneficiaries of retreats as well as challenges to getting people to attend, and questions and comments about how a retreat center might function. They raised concerns about why women often choose not to attend retreats. One of the biggest takeaways was that there needs to be a paradigm shift. We live in a society that does not truly value women, or what we bring to the world. As a result, women internalize outside voices. Women must learn to value ourselves more. This, in turn, will change the ways we allow others to value, or de-value us. As someone's granny said, you get what you expect.

The 1x1 interviews were based on the summary of information generated in the Discovery Workshop and the four questions. This resulted in more focused responses. (see 1x1 Discoveries above). A major take-away from the Workshop and the 1x1 is that responding to the N PO adequately is a huge proposition and will require significant research.

**Next Steps:**

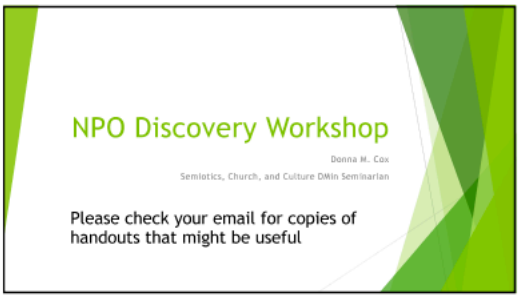
As I consider areas for research, the following areas emerge. First, a key concern raised was that retreats and retreat centers are concerns of the privileged. People with resources have the liberty to think holistically about themselves that women who are worried about putting food on the table, raising children, employment, and paying bills do not. They are unlikely to focus on internal needs when physical needs are so pressing. Second, I am interested in creating a comfortable space for every woman. At the same time, I know I come from a decidedly Christian perspective, one that may be uncomfortable or a turn-off for non-Christians. This became clear in Discovery Workshop. I believe it is too soon to concern myself with the third area that emerged, that of developing a strategic plan for an actual retreat center beyond the ways it impacts the aforementioned.

**APPENDICES**


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Appendix 1 | Discovery Workshop Documentation | |
| | -NPO Workshop pptx | 11 |
| | -NPO Workshop handouts | 15 |
| | -Completed Forms from workshop | 17 |
| Appendix 2 | One-Page Post-Workshop Message To Stakeholders | |
| | -Discovery Workshop Invite | 24 |
| | -Thank You Message | 25 |
| | -Discovery Workshop Summary | 26 |
| Appendix 3 | One-On-One Interview Documentation | |
| | -1x1 Invite | 27 |
| | -1x1 Summary | 29 |

Appendix 1 Discovery Workshop Documentation

**NPO Workshop pptx**

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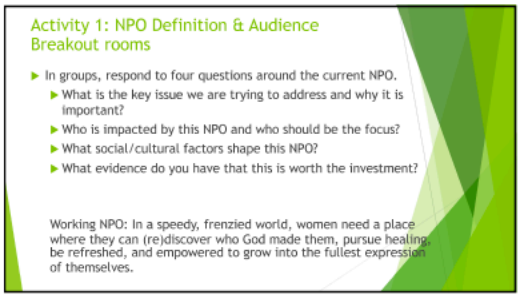
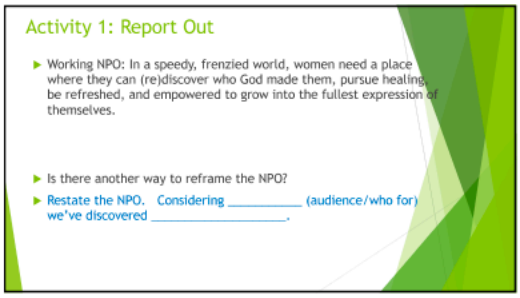

Activity 1: NPO Definition & Audience
Breakout rooms
In groups, respond to four questions around the current NPO.
What is the key issue we are trying to address and why it is important?
Who is impacted by this NPO and who should be the focus?
What social/cultural factors shape this NPO?
What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?
Working NPO: In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

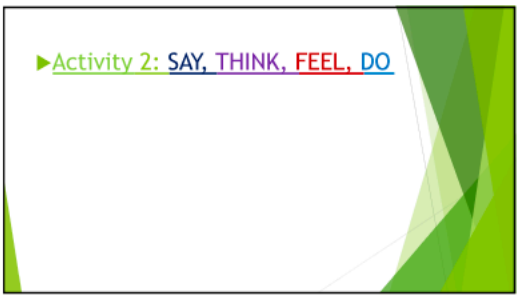
4

Activity 1: Google form
NPO Activity 1

5


Activity 1: Report Out
Working NPO: In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.
Is there another way to reframe the NPO?
Restate the NPO. Considering _____ (audience/who for) we've discovered _____.

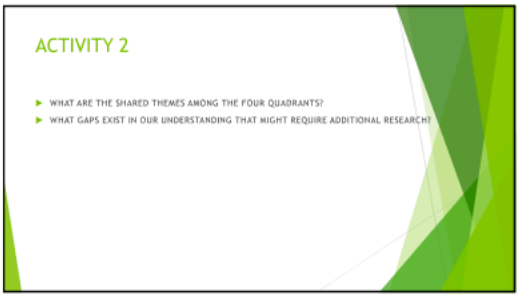
6


Activity 2: SAY, THINK, FEEL, DO

7

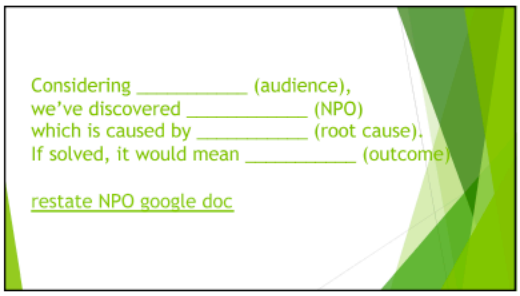
Activity 2: SAY
GOOGLE DOC

8


ACTIVITY 2
WHAT ARE THE SHARED THEMES AMONG THE FOUR QUADRANTS?
WHAT GAPS EXIST IN OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT MIGHT REQUIRE ADDITIONAL RESEARCH?

9

10




11

12

**NPO Workshop handouts**

| WHAT IS THE KEY ISSUE & WHY IS IT IMPORTANT | WHO IS IMPACTED & WHO SHOULD I FOCUS ON? |
| --- | --- |
| WHAT SOCIAL/CULTURAL FACTORS SHAPE THIS NPO? | WHY IS IT WORTH THE INVESTMENT? |

| SAYS | THINKS |
| --- | --- |
| DOES | FEELS |

## WHY IS THIS AN NPO?
## 5 DEEP

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

**Completed Forms From Workshop**

**Part 1**

NPO Statement: Working NPO: In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

NPO: Needs, problem, opportunity

SUMMARY FROM BREAK-OUT GROUPS

Group 1's responses are in purple

| **What is the key issue we are trying to address and why it is important?** | **Who is impacted by this NPO and who should be the focus?** |
|---|---|
| Women have to go find a place, meaning life does not allow for it, it is not built into the structure of our lives<br>Need: find a place<br>Opportunity: space to receive<br><br><br>-Women<br>-Safe space for renewal<br>-Pointing back to God, their identity in who God made them to be<br>-Clarity in who God made us to be and how to walk in our purpose, allow us time to focus in on our purpose and definite key steps in walking that out.<br>-renewal in pressure filled world, how to function on every day basis away from the pressure of the world, how to navigate to a better/calmer place. Always hearing so much dialogue, need a quieter place to listen. Feel by ourselves when walking our path, but we are often working together<br>-get off track, can focus again | Impacted<br>Women (with multiple roles)<br>Their family<br>Anyone under their leadership<br>Can include in a work setting<br>Church, ministry<br>The whole world, imagine a world of healed women<br>People are impacted because we are giving of ourselves and are not taking the time to replenish or "refill"<br>Women, but so many others are impacted by a women being whole as they are integral in the household, workplace, etc.<br>Women who are teachers (formally and informally)<br>We don't know the scope of the facility. Is it weekly, monthly, guest speakers? Hard to come up with some of these things because we don't know what the facility<br><br>Sandwich generation<br>Retired people -looking for the next thing |

| | |
|---|---|
| -friendship, guidance, mentorship. When you can gather a group of women with a vast group of experiences, it can be a valuable experience to have<br>-Opportunity to be alone – not wanting to interact. Need place to interact. Need meditation. Sweet silence<br>-need chance to focus/refocus<br>-post COVID, collective grieving | Consider: difference between assignment (temporary, maybe) and purpose (reason why you are here) definition |
| **What social/cultural factors shape this NPO?**<br>Where you are coming from, think secular vs faith based?<br>Social: Different stereotypes that women face<br>I.e. men have a "man-cave"<br>Traditional vs nontraditional roles in relationships (personal or professional)<br>Cultural: Race and socioeconomic differences<br>Build into the outcome an ongoing, perpetual change in lifestyle; not just an experience<br>Consider small groups within a retreat.ie, 4th time retreatants grouped with other returning retreatants and newbies in one group<br><br>When thinking about the focus, what different types of demographics are going to be there? Are there going to be trauma groups?<br><br>Low income or limited resources, recovering or going through issues/traumas (substances abuse, etc.). What needs to be in place so that people know about it and can access. | **What evidence do you have that this is worth the investment?**<br>There is obviously an audience for it, there are lots of retreats for women<br>COVID atmosphere. There's always a COVID (metaphor) that we are dealing with (personal, another global pandemic)<br>We (women) need to be filled back up<br>Because of COVID, there is the new normal where there is value in "joining" something. We cannot travel to a retreat center.<br>Women are due restoration; we keep pouring out and fighting for equality but our well is not being filled back up<br>Learn to take care of yourself and to also advocate for yourself with family and friends<br><br>Personal experiences/testimony- having spent the weekend feels inspired, rested<br>Refocused and recommitted to living the purpose that God has set forth for me.<br>Need quiet focusing space.<br>Mission is refocused<br>Mental health – being in community, being in therapy, giving times to do reflection and meditation.<br>Mary Martha balance-<br>Jesus telling Martha that Mary made the better choice. WE have to have time to sit at Jesus' feet in order to do the Martha stuff. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Caring for parents/children and need focus<br><br>Life changes (finishing high school, just retired) and need guidance – navigate different times in their lives.<br><br>If we are to try to help people with limited means, how would people access the building?<br><br>Trauma- unexpected, emergency trauma. Need place of rest<br><br>**How do we encourage people to come out to these things? Especially in the Black community. Child care?<br>How to get people to come out—there are people that are hungering for these things and will seek this opportunity out then sharing.<br><br>Needs of specific cultural, ethnic, group that have special needs…. We have things in common but there are distinctions – must not 'over generalize' women's experiences (danger) | The preparation to go to retreat (Mary stuff) is often not worth the effort when you have to return to Martha stuff.<br><br>Need community assistance for women to do Mary by doing their Marth for a bit.<br>Integration is critical. - long term benefit<br>Re-entry is key |

**Part 2: Say, Do, Feel, Think**

| **SAY** | **THINK** |
|---|---|
| I'm powerful, I have power, I am full, Thank you and speak more openly about experiences and feelings, invite others, Yeah, I'm bad, I am worthy, Now I know!, speak to how they are known in heaven, as to how they are already known by God, nothing is impossible, speak their authentic self, already done, awesomeness of different expressions, exercise their new voice (sponges absorb something new), I am empowered to speak my truth and it's not just okay, but a great thing to do, I am loved, I embody who God made me. | abundant beliefs about themselves in faith-filled agreement<br>solution-oriented<br>(send me those words Bekah)<br>think more positively about our self-care, think more hopefully, more freely, stop constraining thoughts about certain things,<br>successfully reframe thinking (transformed by renewing of the mind)<br>be more intentional about what agreeing to do<br><br>identify internal dialogue, interrupt the actions that result from internal thinking/processing<br>heightened sense of gratitude as a life mission!<br>'think' I'm worth the time/effort to spend time on ME... making me better … to be better in my purpose |
| **DO** | **FEEL** |
| eliminate things that do not lead to purpose (things that are not life-giving)<br>heightened sense of gratitude as a life mission!<br>create boundaries!! It's okay to do less.<br>do more intentional self-care (boundaries) result in doing better work<br>seek more growth opportunities and share the opportunities with others. (renewed mind)<br>invest in telling others and helping make it happen<br>(need for on-going space and opportunities) - ongoing community such as FB community with group coaching , meet-ups (root groups- Pat) | not feel obligated to agree to everything offered<br>recharged, energized and have some direction/goals to achieve<br>feel empowered, full<br>feel validated that someone heard her<br>feel relieved and empowered to share more boldly<br>valued, renewed and freshened<br>relieved, light like something is off her shoulders<br>loved, validated, empowered, emboldened<br>good, comfortable<br>settling in self<br>feel better<br>feel more peace |

| | |
|---|---|
| (for me: build team that includes behavioral scientists and other experts to help with blind spots, marriage counselors etc.)<br>more prayer time, specific quiet time to pray | recognize that you will be changed and re-entry might cause conflict. environment might be expecting woman to return back the same. People may not really want people changed (they want them rested so they can still do what they've been doing);<br><br>*need attention to re-entry: off ramp/on ramp (structure, prioritize learnings so that other people's health doesn't come at the risk of my own)<br>Growing/change can have repercussions! (when change is at different levels/tempi) - what tools can be provided? Risky business<br>reteach people how to honor and value<br>BOUNDARIES - personal<br>Discernment comes into play on how to use the change and power, new tools acquired.. |

**Part 3: Root Causes from the 5 Whys**

| **Group 1** | **Group 2** | **Group 3** |
|---|---|---|
| Too many distractions that keep us from finding inner,<br>Lots of responsibilities<br>Lack of role balance<br>Negative energy - tearing each other apart<br>Unattainable 'rules'<br>Oppression from Adam & Eve - never meant to bear things on our own = extremes. | We don't find space<br>Culture values business<br>Feelings of insecurity<br>Unaware of intrinsic value<br><br>Because in today's culture we don't find space to pursue discovering ourselves and finding out our purpose and lives calling<br>because our culture values busyness<br>Because busyness makes us appear important<br>because most of us are deeply insecure and don't realize we already are important<br>Because most of us live with a deep sense of unworthiness and agree to a lie that we are not enough. We are unaware of intrinsic value and that we are Gods highest form of creation | Many responsibilities<br>Don't make time<br>- the retreat experience is better when everyone is able to get something out it. it makes for a more rewarding experience. ( this topic came up when we were discussing racial and cultural factors in how women experience retreats so my thinking is about ensuring the retreat is inclusive<br>- It's important to make the retreat worth it. If enter retreat as a participant thinking it isn't going to be worth your time, then it probably won't. This came up when we were discussing how much work it is to get ready for a retreat and then all the work you come back to and that makes it feel like it won't be worth it. So, retreatants need to be intentional about making it worth their while<br><br>Here are the notes from the consensus breakout room:<br>It is evident that to our observations with what is going on now<br>Women are busy and have many responsibilities |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | Do not have resources to fulfil spiritual purpose in life<br>It becomes secondary<br>We take care of everyone else<br>Because we are expected to<br>Because I have done it before<br>Because I can<br>I can't only Jesus can |

Multiple responsibilities/busyness
In a society that doesn't value what women bring
Women don't value ourselves, who we are, what we bring, we internalize outside voices
Need for paradigm shift to value self = be more valued and value self (what you expect is what you get)
- the retreat experience is better when everyone is able to get something out it. it makes for a more rewarding experience. ( this topic came up when we were discussing racial and cultural factors in how women experience retreats so my thinking is about ensuring the retreat is inclusive

- It's important to make the retreat worth it. If enter retreat as a participant thinking it isn't going to be worth your time, then it probably won't. This came up when we were discussing how much work it is to get ready for a retreat and then all the work you come back to and that makes it feel like it won't be worth it. So, retreatants need to be intentional about making it worth their while.

**Consensus:**

Women have many responsibilities, driven by expectations (internal or external and influenced by roles we play). This mean we don't have/make time for ourselves or closeness to God and in turn we are not fulfilling our purpose.

**Appendix 2**

**Discovery Workshop Invite**

As you know, I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program, Semiotics, Church, and Culture at Portland Seminary and started classes in August. Pray for a sister! It's really exciting and I'm grateful for the opportunity to become even more deeply prepared for ministry in the 21st century. Part of the DMin program is to develop a program or project that fills a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) for our ministry context. It has been my heart's desire to create a Retreat/Resource Center so that is the Opportunity I am working on. What makes this program different from my previous doctoral studies is that we work on the NPO from the very beginning and have several touch points where we must engage stakeholders.

Our program has a very specific process and timeline that must be used this semester. In October, I have to hold a Discovery Workshop in which I get important feedback. I am asking you to participate in this Discovery Workshop. This is a ONE time commitment. Ideally, we would gather in one place but because I am reaching out to women across the country, it will have to be via…… Zoom.

Please provide the following feedback. Because the workshop has to go through the IRB review process at George Fox University before it can take place, I would appreciate a response as soon as possible. The process can take as long as two weeks and I have to submit paperwork the week of September 27.

Thank you so much.

Donna Cox

1. Yes, I'm willing to commit.
2. No, I'm unable to commit. May I suggest _____ who you can reach via email at _____ or by text at _____.

If you agree, please indicate as many of these times as you are willing to make yourself available. I will select the date that works best for most people. All times are Eastern Standard Time.

Sunday, October 25: 2:30 pm
Thursday, October 29: 6:00 pm
Saturday, October 31: 9:00 am; 10:00 am; 11:00 am
Sunday, November 1: 2:30 pm

**One-Page Post-Workshop Message To Stakeholders**

**Thank You Message to Discovery Workshop Participants**

Dear…..

My heart - and multiple documents - are filled to overflowing. Thank you so much for giving me the gifts of your time, thoughts, presence, expertise, laughter, and joy. I really wish we had been able to gather in person. I can tell you that space would have been LIT!

This workshop could have taken multiple hours. Portland Seminary provides the format and the questions we are to ask in order to generate data. Throughout today, I was very conscious of the amount of time you were giving so it may have felt as if we left things hanging. We did. There were no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and there were no 'tangents' so everything you offered today, or will send me, is important. This coming week I will take the data and look more closely for overlap, common themes etc. I really will appreciate anything you send me or ideas that emerge as you go about your work this week. Today confirmed there is a tremendous need and opportunity to positively impact the lives of women. I'm really excited about how God might use me in this area. I know each of you is already making a difference and I want to know more of your stories.

I pray God's blessings over each of you. I ask God to move in those areas where you are fully aware of needing more Presence. I ask God to move in those rooms you most resist opening. Each of you is a gifted, passionate, loving, serving, generous woman. We need more of you, the authentic you who shows up fully - filled to overflowing and watering others *out of that overflow*.

I love you.

Donna

**Discovery Workshop Summary**

**Working NPO:** Working NPO: In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

The following is a summary of some of the findings from our workshop.

**Activity 1:** What is the key issue and why is it important? Who is impacted by the NPO and who should be the focus?; What social/cultural factors shape the NPO? and What evidence is there that this is worth the investment.

*Considering women, we discovered*

1. *Taking time to rest, be quiet, focus/refocus, (re)filled, grieve, remember who she is, or be renewed does not happen organically for women;*
2. *There is a need for dedicated space and time for women to attend to herself in ways that are (re)generative, healing and refreshing;*
3. *Life is better for everyone when women are whole;*
4. *Life is filled with trauma which is rarely attended to. There is always a "COVID" to deal with (personal or corporate) and*
5. *Women need space for ongoing, perpetual change, not just another experience.*

**IMAGINE A WORLD OF HEALED WOMEN**

**Activity 2:** This was a variation of the Empathy Workshop in which participants built on Activity #1 by considering what women would SAY, THINK, FEEL or DO DIFFERENTLY if the NPO were solved. The following arose across categories and encapsulate the ideas expressed.

*If the NPO were addressed, women would operate from a place of validation, feel empowered to speak and live their truth, set clearer boundaries, and be more intentional about not allowing herself to operate from an internal deficit.*

**Activity 3:** In this final activity, we sought to discover the root causes of the NPO through using The Five Whys activity.

This is the final causal statement the group agreed upon:

*Women have many responsibilities, driven by expectations, internal or external, and influenced by roles we play. This means we do not have or make time for ourselves or closeness with God, and as a result, we do not fulfill our purpose.*

**Next Steps:** Share our findings with three women who have agreed to one-on-one interviews and synthesize the information for the final report.

**Appendix 3**

One-x-One Invitation

One-On-One Interview Documentation

**Invitation**

Each seminarian in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Portland Seminary selects a Need, Problem or Opportunity (NPO) which she will work on for the entire three years of academic study. In the first semester, we hold a Discovery Workshop in order to seek clarity from stakeholders around the first draft of the NPO statement. Portland Seminary has a very prescriptive method for conducting the workshops and it was used as required.

Sixteen women plus myself assembled via Zoom on Sunday, October 25, 2020 to participate in the Discovery Workshop. Participants included women from early 30s to early 70s; working and retired; Black, White, and Dominican; married, single, and divorced; and one married Lesbian. College students had been invited but none participated. I note that, though not each participant was actually attending church prior to the pandemic, all with the exception of one, spoke from a Christian perspective. This made the one somewhat uncomfortable because it brought up earlier hurt over the lack of acceptance by the church. As well, she indicated to me that she had not been prepared for the heteronormative perspective to be so dominant. In retrospect, I realize that the assembled group of women, while diverse in many ways, did not represent non-Christian, lower educated or socio-economic levels. Each person present had at least a bachelor's degree with multiple doctoral degrees represented as well. The women were careful to state that we should not overgeneralize women's experiences and that specific groups would have differing needs.

My role in the workshop was as observer and workshop facilitator; I did not provide details about the NPO beyond saying it has long been my desire to open a retreat center but I understand God may lead me to other ways to meet the need and opportunity. My task was to not influence the direction of the discussion but to keep people on task.

Working NPO: In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

The following is a summary of some of the findings from that workshop.

**Activity 1:** Participants spent time in small groups brainstorming around four key questions before reporting back: What is the key issue and why is it important?; Who is impacted by the NPO and who should be the focus?; What social/cultural factors shape the NPO? and What evidence is there that this is worth the investment.

The conversations were very rich. Because this part of the workshop was intentionally very open, there were ideas around what retreats might look like, beneficiaries of retreats as well as challenges to getting people to attend, and questions and comments about how a retreat center might function. An analysis of the comments can be summarized in this way.

*Considering women, we discovered*

1. *Taking time to rest, be quiet, focus/refocus, (re)filled, grieve, remember who she is, or be renewed does not happen organically for women;*
2. *There is a need for dedicated space and time for women to attend to herself in ways that are (re)generative, healing and refreshing;*
3. *Life is better for everyone when women are whole;*
4. *Life is filled with trauma which is rarely attended to. There is always a "COVID" to deal with (personal or corporate) and*
5. *Women need space for ongoing, perpetual change, not just another experience.*

**IMAGINE A WORLD OF HEALED WOMEN**

**Activity 2:** This was a variation of the Empathy Workshop in which participants built on Activity #1 by considering what women would SAY, THINK, FEEL or DO DIFFERENTLY if the NPO were solved. The following arose across categories and encapsulate the ideas expressed. *If the NPO were addressed, women would operate from a place of validation, feel empowered to speak and live their truth, set clearer boundaries, and be more intentional about not allowing herself to operate from an internal deficit.*

**Activity 3:** In this final activity, participants sought to discover the root causes of the NPO through using The Five Whys activity. Each person was asked to return to the NPO statement and ask themselves if it were true. After writing their first response, they were instructed to go five questions deep. After spending time with their own thoughts, they went back to small groups to discuss the root cause that emerged for them and to come to group consensus. Upon returning to the large group we discussed the three consensuses. Not surprisingly, there was overlap.

This is the final causal statement the group agreed upon: *Women have many responsibilities, driven by expectations, internal or external, and influenced by roles we play. This means we do not have or make time for ourselves or closeness with God, and as a result, we do not fulfill our purpose.*

My questions for you:

1. What rings true/do you think we got right and why?
2. What did we get wrong/what do you disagree with and why
3. What gaps do you see that might require additional research?

**One-on-One Interviews Summary**

***#1 Senior Vice President, Communications, Marketing and Public Affairs of a major mid-western corporation, African American, early 60s***.

1. What rings true/do you think we got right and why?

    a. For women who already have a relationship with God, this kind of opportunity is an enhancement to their current state of being – which is a good thing.

2. What did we get wrong/what do you disagree with and why?

    a. This is very much a "haves" kind of a discussion. As we think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, women who are worried about how to pay the bills, feed the kids, get to work, get work, etc are unlikely to focus on their internal needs in order to be "whole." If this is a path that is to be pursued, think you have to come to terms with who your market is. And that market is not ALL women.

3. What is missing/are there any evident blind spots?

    a. See #2.

    b. Have to be comfortable with the market who will find value in this kind of opportunity. And there is nothing wrong with that. Why we have Walmart and Target; Saks and Kohls; Whole Foods and Aldi.

    c.

4. What gaps do you see that might require additional research?

    a. Understanding and focusing on the needs of your target market. Once you become comfortable that what you are offering is not for all women, you will be able to tailor your opportunities to the needs of the women who will come when you build it.
    b. I think you should launch with a targeted audience in mind and then expand as you get more experience and start to see demand from others.

    c. Sustainability is always an issue.

        - What are participants willing to pay for and how much for how long? Memberships? A la carte options? Etc
        - What, beyond compelling content, will keep you engaged?
        - How will organizer determine satisfaction? Surveys, interviews, referrals?

- How important is attachment to traditional or more contemporary faith organization?

***#2 Director of a World Arts Center and Associate Professor in a mid-southern religious university, Caucasian, early 60s***

**1.** What rings true/do you think we got right and why?

a. It's true that retreats are a great source of renewal for women, and that their needs are often centered around validation of who they are as well as the need to maintain healthy boundaries so that they don't operate from internal deficits or unaddressed trauma.

**2.** What did we get wrong/what do you disagree with and why?

a. I didn't disagree with what I saw, but there is still much to flesh out in terms of details of "how" to address these needs (other than providing a retreat space).

**3.** What is missing/are there any evident blind spots?

a. I think this is a great start to a valuable project. As the project develops, it would be great to see answers to the following questions:

- What kinds of *training/guidance* to offer at the retreat that would address:

  - Trauma Healing
  - Creating and maintaining healthy boundaries
  - Dealing with change
  - Understanding our identity in Christ and who God made us to be (Spiritual gifts/vision/callings)

**4.** What gaps do you see that might require additional research?

a. What kinds of activities and trainings do women need at these retreats?
b. What about the role of silent retreats?
c. What kinds of retreat fees are affordable for women?
d. What kinds of partnerships with churches can be developed?

***#3 Pediatrician and Assistant Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology and Critical Care at a major east coast hospital, African American, late 30s.***

4. What rings true/do you think we got right and why?

a. I agree that women do not often enough take time for themselves to reflect and be refreshed. There is a sense of responsibility others that often overshadows their own needs.

b. I also agree that while experiences are needed, ongoing spaces or patterns are needed to keep women processing and refreshing themselves.

5. What did we get wrong/what do you disagree with and why?

a. Taking time to reflect and give space for processing may open up things for some women that cannot be "repackaged" in the space of a retreat. Likely important for there to be options for guided work – counselors or psychologist present to help with trauma reflection that, if not handled well, can leave a woman in a more broken place before healing has happened. Thus, how the experience ends or rather where the women are at the end of the experience will determine if they are able to go forward and operate from a place of validation, etc.

6. What is missing/are there any evident blind spots?

a. Nothing seemed to be missing;

b. Definitely important to acknowledge the different seasons women might be in and how that impacts their perspective and time and balance and even how they move forward from the experience

7. What gaps do you see that might require additional research?

a. Knowing what to focus on IN the retreat vs after-work that the women can continue doing

b. Whether the composition of the group of women present matters – similar to the diversity mentioned within this focus group, does different work/refreshing/processing get done depending on the make-up of the women present at the retreat. Trust is big when we are asking a group of people to be vulnerable and participate in work that is very personal and revealing about maybe their shortcomings or struggles. I do not know if groups that are diverse vs more similar are beneficial. I imagine a more homogenous group can offer people a more "obvious safe space." BUT a diverse group may offer broader perspectives for the participants. A diverse group may also require some ground rules set early on that ensure everyone feels equally safe in the shared space.

# Appendix B– Milestone 2 NPO Topic Expertise Essay

# INTRODUCTION

# SECTION 1: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Women's Need For Sacred Space in the Biblical World

By the end of the doctoral program, I will develop a strategic plan for space where women can attend to themselves in ways that are (re)generative, healing, and refreshing. The working idea for the space is the establishment of a retreat center. The goal of the work this semester is to look more closely at issues impacting women and the benefits of coming out from amongst the cares, burdens, challenges, and expectations of a too fast, too cluttered, too everything world. The normal, life-sustaining cycle is rest and work. Yet, for many, the cycle has become an uphill, life-draining spiral of busy, a story easily observed in declining physical, emotional and spiritual health. Even Jesus, though fully human and fully God, observed the cycle of rest and work (John 4:6; Mark 4:38; Mark 6:31).

This pervasive value system impacts women in dishonoring ways. First, busyness covers feelings of unworthiness, insecurities, and makes it difficult to fully understand who God created them to be. Second society devalues women; there seems to be an inability or unwillingness to recognize what women bring to the table. As a result, women do not always honor themselves. Instead, they internalize outside voices above their own or that of the Creator. Third, when women do not value themselves as God's highest form of creation, they are distracted and barely have energy to think about (re)generation, personal healing, being refreshed. Self becomes such a low priority that women do not have or make time to do things that help them fulfill their purpose. As a result, women need space.

Three scriptures serve as scaffolding for this part of the work. First, told in Luke 10:38-42 is Luke's short but poignant story about Mary and Martha, one that emphasizes the duality women continue to face daily, that of being and doing. Second is the concept of Sabbath Rest and the imagery of refreshing water as found in Isaiah 58:11-14 and Hebrews 4:9. Acknowledging and reconciling the constant push and pull women experience, as well as observing the benefits promised as we refashion the spiral back into a healthy cycle, serve as inspiration for the creation of the retreat center or other sacred space.

# Textual Discussions

## Mary's & Martha's Story: Luke 10:38-42

Though this story occupies a mere five verses in the Lukan gospel, it continues to be the subject of much discussion and deep debate. Jesus, traveling with fellow workers seeks hospitality from friends in Bethany.[85] Luke introduces Martha, who greeted Jesus and welcomed [hypodechomai] him into her home as an honored guest.[86] The third character in the story is Mary who Luke tells us, was seated at Jesus' feet listening to His words. The comparison is immediately obvious; Mary quietly seated [parakathizō] and Martha distracted [perispaō] by much serving

[diakonian].[87] Recognizing an inequity, Martha takes her concern, not to Mary who interestingly remains silent in the story, but directly to Jesus to whom she appeals as Lord [Kyriou].[88] "Don't You care that my sister is sitting while I do all of the work? Tell her to get up and help me!" Rather than doing as Martha hopes, Jesus answers, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

No matter how you read the periope, Luke showcases a conflictual relation that creates a value system dichotomy; one sister exemplifies the values; the other does not. Jesus' characterization of one choice as better, despite the softening of speaking Martha's name twice, fuels this comparison. One end of the interpretative spectrum shows sweet, docile Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, student to Rabbi, while anxious, mouthy Martha dashes from place to place, growing more frustrated by the moment, finally spews it all on the Lord. At the other end are sisters deeply engage as ministry

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1Luke does not mention the name of the town where Martha and Mary lived. We find the location of their home in John 11:1 which indicates that Lazarus, who was sick, was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

[86] Though there are dissenting voices, it seems clear from the literature, and from the pericope itself, that Martha is the homeowner. *Hypodechomai*, receive, welcome, entertain as a guest BAGD 844.

[87] *Parakathizō*, sit beside BAGD 616; *perispaō*, be pulled or dragged away, become; be distracted, quite busy, overburdened BAGD 650;diakonian, service; ministry, mediation, assignment; service; engagement in preparations for a social event. BDAG ??? Pamela Thimmes notes in Narrrative and Rhetorical Conflict In Luke 10:38-42: A Cautionary Tale, that in both Luke and John Martha is describe as/associated with diakonia, a role that serves as a metaphor for community service and leadership in ministry (pg. 56). Martha was not necessarily overwhelmed with kitchen tasks and preparations for a meal.

[88] *Kyriou*, owner; lord, master

partners. Martha is at home, overwhelmed with the burden of leadership and ministry, while Mary is off traveling with the 72 and not pulling her full leadership weight.[89]

Across the interpretive spectrum and throughout the years, the story of Martha and Mary continues to call to women. For some, it is a tool used to affirm a patriarchial system that keeps women in the proverbial kitchen. For others, it is a mirror through which women measure their own effectiveness and/or spirituality. Irrespective of how you read, and where you stand on the interpretative spectrum, there is a deeper meaning for women. It is not solely a question of whether a woman is Martha or Mary; She is both. Each day women have to choose which part of her will show up.

## Sabbath Rest and Refreshing Water

A look at Sabbath Rest is critical to any plan to create a sacred space for women. For this stage of the research, I rely on two scriptures: Isaiah 58, specifically verses 11, 13-14 and Hebrews 4:9.

At its simplest form, Sabbath [sabbat] is the seventh day of the week. More importantly, it is the day during the creation account blessed and hallowed by God, the day of rest, a practice echoed in the Ten Commandments. This is not a legalistic demand but rather an invitation to a life of delight (Isa 58:13).[90] Keeping Sabbath is to step out of the toil of work or daily encumbrances and to step into reliance on the work of God. It is in Sabbath that you "find your joy in the Lord." (Isa 58:14) In other words, Sabbath is delight-full. As you honor the gift of rest, as you set aside your own interests, and fully enjoy Sabbath's pleasures, Yahweh becomes your delight and there flows between you waves of mutual joy. Frederick J. Gaiser, illuminating the connection between Sabbath Rest and social justice, concludes that every living thing needs a Sabbath, a time of refreshment. Sabbath is that day of healing, a matter of justice on multiple levels, including personal.[91]

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[89] Jane Terlesky and Warren Carter are two of the scholars who make a case for totally reimagining this famous story. Both maintain that rather than being distracted by kitchen duties, her actions were consistent with those of male leaders in Acts and denoted as Diakonia or "much ministry." Getting Martha Out of the Kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 Again and There Was An Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe: Was it Martha? provide a compelling case for Martha being burned out, not from preparing a meal, but by the burden of ministry. Carter explains that by the end of Luke-Acts, the noun *diakonia* has been used eight times in contexts that concern leadership and ministry and not kitchen activity but participation with others in leadership and ministry on behalf of the Christian community" Warren Carter, "Getting Martha out of the Kitchen: Luke 10:38-42 Again." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996): 264-280.

[90] BDB 8588 *Sabbath* luxury, exquisite delight.

[91] Frederick J. Gaiser in The Delight of the Sabbath: An Exegetical/Homiletical Study of Isaiah 58, contends that Jesus' healing on the Sabbath connected it to justice and human well-being which

The New Testament writer of Hebrews in 4:9 uses the word sabbatismos, one of two primary words used in Hebrews 3-4 to signify rest. Robert Grossman concludes that sabbatismos is "nothing more or less than a weekly resting from labor," necessary to entering into an anticipated eternal rest. It is, therefore, a reiteration of the "rest-command" of the Fourth Commandment. (125)[92] By using two terms for rest, the writer paints a picture of the importance of the cycle of rest or sabbath-keeping, sabbatismos (4:9) and labor, katapausis (3:7-4:13), a pattern established by God in creation and repeated in the decalogue. Though it points to eternal rest, it is clearly not just for that great getting' up mornin' but to be practiced on earth.

Finally, I return to Isaiah 58. Though its prophetic message was delivered to the house of Jacob concerning their perfidy in worship, verse 11 holds a promise I will use to guide my thoughts about the creation of a retreat center or other sacred space: The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and He will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Despite being called to task for shallow worship and behaviors opposing God's plan, they are given an opportunity to rethink the attitude of their hearts (inward) and to change their behaviors (outward). In so doing, God provides

guidance, satisfaction, and strength.[93] Jeremiah 31:12 paints a similar picture: They will come home and sing songs of joy on the heights of Jerusalem. They will be radiant because of the Lord's good gifts— the abundant crops of grain, new wine, and olive oil, and the healthy flocks and herds. Their life will be like a watered garden, and all their sorrows will be gone. (NLT)

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became codified in the seventh century BCE. (229) The Sabbath Rest was not just for the Israelites but for slaves, aliens, and even livestock.

[92] In his detailed essay, *The Sabbath of Hebrews 4:9,* Grossman critically examines words used to convey rest. He concludes *sabbatismos* was intentionally chosen to convey the point of weekly rest-day for the people of God because of its placement in a pericope which is very concerned with a heavenly rest for God's people and for which the word *katapausis* is used. That future rest finds its antecedent type in the Fourth Commandment or the creation ordinance upon which it rests. 130 Grossmann, Robert E. "The Sabbath of Hebrews 4:9." *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 2, no. 2 (Fall 1986): 125–37. http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.udayton.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a6h&AN=ATLA0000997402&site=eds-live.

[93] This is not the first time God's promises are wrapped in the metaphor of water. Isaiah 41:18 I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water. (NKJV)

## Synthesis of Themes, Values, and Commitments

In scripture, there are several well-known stories of the healing and transformation that occurred when women had encounters with Jesus: the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42); the hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:27-34); Simon's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-41); Mary Magdalene (Luke 8:2) and many who remain unnamed. Yet, in the story of Martha and Mary, though Jesus heard Martha's complaint, there was no immediate resolution. It would be easy to assume no miracle, healing, or transformation was needed. Or the assumption may be that the miracle occurred only when Martha checked her attitude, put her apron down, and sat at Jesus' feet. I think we miss an important point. The miracle appears as we pull the lens farther out and view Martha and Mary as a whole instead of as two people, one good and one bad. Martha's cry is that of every working woman or stay-at-home Mom who feels pressed in and overwhelmed by the sheer amount of things and people pulling on her time and energies. She needs to complain to someone because there are times when it is all just too much! This is a legitimate need. Her feelings are important and deserve a hearing. Every woman feels like Martha sometimes. At the same time, every woman's heart longs for Mary's portion. As the Psalmist expressed it, her soul longs after God in the same way the deer pants for streams of water. (Psalm 42:1) Mary needs time and space to sit at the feet of Jesus, no matter how much work there is to do. That, too, is a legitimate need and the feelings very important.

Martha and Mary are metaphors for the cycle of work and rest established by God at creation and modeled by Jesus. Martha is called to set aside the work and enjoy sabbatismos. Mary is invited to return from her time with Jesus to fruitful, necessary work, to diakonian. The prophet's words to Judah apply to Martha-Mary in the 21st century. God still calls her to come away, just as the lover calls his beloved to spend time with him.[94] God beckons Martha-Mary to a time of exquisite delight, a time so rich it feeds her very soul. It provides fuel until the next time she intentionally slips away.

This is the needed cycle yet it is difficult to obtain for many women. The NPO, In a speedy, frenzied world, women need a place where they can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves, compels this writer to help women remember that there is, indeed a Sabbath Rest available to, and needful for, them. It also offers a way to provide a solution for the many who find rest unobtainable without causing more work.

[94] Song of Solomon 2:10

# SECTION 2: TOPIC HISTORY AND KEY VOICES

## Topic History

The necessity for people to re-engage, with intentionality, the work-rest cycle modeled by God in the creation narrative and Jesus throughout His public ministry is at the heart of my NPO project. It is a cycle largely corrupted as the world spins ever faster and busyness becomes a badge of honor. Though the reclamation of rest as a vital part of the ability to work is crucial for all, the NPO specifically targets the needs of God's daughters for whom rest is too often considered a luxury.

In order to better understand the need and to advance solutions, a look at the history of Sabbath Rest as a concept and practice is important. Likewise, a glimpse into how Sabbath Rest morphed into formalized retreats, first for men and, through particular women's efforts and visions, a practice opened to women can be instructive. I turn first to Scripture as the basis for later scholarship on the history and development of retreats.

## God and Jesus as Models for a Work-Rest Cycle

Though an eschatological reading is possible in the creation narratives, of particular interest to this study is God's deliberate separation of rest from work as a model of the necessary rhythm of life. From the opening of Genesis, we enter into God's creative work, what Leonard Sweet describes as God playing in a sandbox and making mudpies.[95] For six days, God creatively separated: light from darkness; day from night; water from dry land; water from water; sky, waters and soil; vegetation from soil; and light-bearers (stars, sun, moon) from darkness. Into this world of separated parts, God reached into dirt and water, formed man and breathed into him the breath of life. From man, God separated a rib and created woman. The first act God took on behalf of the created humans was to initiate them into work, giving them the responsibility of tending the garden and ruling over the fish in the seas, birds in the skin, livestock and every creature that moved on the earth. All of this, God proclaimed to be very good. (Genesis 1:31).

On the seventh day, God rested. This is reiterated in Exodus, 20:11, For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. [96] In this case, the word rested is much more than simply ceasing from action. As Wayne Muller explains in Sabbath: Finding Rest,

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[95] Sweet, Leonard, The Well-Played Life: Why Pleasing God Doesn't Have To Be Such Hard Work. [Bonita Springs, FL: Tyndale House Publishing,2014] 121.

[96] Tyndale House Publishers, *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Ex 20:8–11.

Renewal, And Delight In Our Busy Lives, God was refreshed. "Here the word, 'refreshed,' vaiynafesh, literally means, and God exhaled. The creation of the world was like the life-quickening inhale; the Sabbath is the exhale. Thus, in the beginning, all creation moves with the rhythm of the inhale and the exhale. Without the Sabbath exhale, the life-giving inhale is impossible." [97] On the seventh day God finished God's work by creating menuha, tranquility, serenity, peace, and repose, rest. "Until the Sabbath, creation was unfinished. Only after the birth of menuha, only with tranquility and rest, was the circle of creation made full and complete".[98]

Life's work-rest, inhale-exhale cycle was firmly established by God and exemplified in Jesus' life and ministry in the New Testament. An itinerant preacher, Jesus moved from place to place, healing, teaching, and mentoring those with whom He traveled and those He met along the way. Though His work was critical, Jesus intuitively understood the importance of separating periods of work by periods of time set aside for prayer, rest, and encounter with God. Interestingly, Jesus did not allow unhealed people or unmet needs to deter Him from taking the time needed to retreat. At regular intervals, Jesus pulled away from the crowds and the pressure of people pulling on Him. At one point, Jesus took a 40-day Judean wilderness retreat to fast, pray, and spend time with God. (Luke 4:1-2) Though the practice of retreats predates Christianity, it is Jesus' retreat that served as the justification and example for Christian religious for centuries.[99]

## Formalization of Retreats As Spiritual Practice

The modern practice of making retreats can be traced to St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). In 1521, Benedictine monk, Juan Chanones gave The Exercises for the Spiritual Life, written by Abbot Garcia Jiminez de Cisneros, to Ignatius (born Inigo). They had such a huge impact on Ignatius' spirituality that he began to adapt the exercises and lead others through them. It was not long before he developed and refined his own set of Christian meditations, prayers, and contemplations to be studied over a period of 28-30 days.[100] The goal of the Spiritual Exercises was for participants to discern the will of God and commit to follow Jesus at any cost.[101] Though Ignatius mentored many through the Exercises, a significant development occurred when, in 1534, Ignatius took seven men on a spiritual journey. This resulted in the formation of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), a group with

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[97] Wayne Muller. Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives [New York: Bantam Publishing, 1999], 36.

[98] Ibid. 37.

[99] Hugh Jenkins' Masters thesis…..

[100] Counsell, Michael. *2000 Years of Prayer*, 2004, ISBN 1-85311-623-8 p. 203

[101] *"Louis J. Puhl, S.J. Translation - The Spiritual Exercises". Ignatian Spirituality*.

an emphasis, not on monasticism but on service. The shift from monasticism to active ministry was radical and strengthened the need for retreats where the Spiritual Exercises were taught and people could learn to practice personal devotion on their own. Nearly 500 years later, the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola remain a centerpiece of Jesuit formation and one of the most popular retreat tools in the Catholic Church. Because of the practicality and adaptability, the Exercises have become popular across Christian denominations.[102] Pope Pius XI made St. Ignatius of Loyola the patron saint of spiritual retreats in 1922.[103]

## Historical Look At Retreats for Women

Though the Exercises became popular in monasteries and amongst religious and semi-religious houses, things were different for women. Among female orders, frequent requests for guides moved Roman authorities to allow Jesuits to enter convents and monasteries to direct the Exercises. Since permission was typically granted for one occasion only, community superiors began to direct the sisters themselves on an annual basis.[104] Throughout most of the 17th century, retreats were not considered appropriate for women. This began to shift with the intervention of wealthy noblewoman, Catherine de Francheville (1620–1689), who, from her youth, had received spiritual direction from the Jesuits. Catherine was drawn to the emerging Jesuit spirituality that espoused holiness as possible for all Christians. While this was great in theory, the fact that there was no congregation of female Jesuits meant their espoused beliefs were not tested. In 1665 Catherine began accommodating women for week-long retreats directed by her own spiritual guide, Fr. Adrien Daran, in the small house she rented in Vannes. These efforts caused much contempt and ended in public denunciation by episcopal representatives. Vincent Huby, Rector of the Jesuit College of Quimper, advocated for a house for women to be built in and overseen by the Ursuline community. However, within a short time, Superior General Giovanni Paolo Olivia used the weight of his authority to denounce the initiative for women and forbade Jesuits from taking any leadership role.

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[102] For a detailed understanding of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, I recommend Moshe Sluhovsky's "A Biography of the Spiritual Exercises" in *Jesuit Historiography Online* or Ignatian Spirituality at https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/.

[103] https://www.britannica.com/biography/St-Ignatius-of-Loyola

[104] Iparraguirre, *Historia*, 432–61 and 495–534. For the Directory text, see *Directoria Exercitiorum spiritualium (1540–1599)*, ed. Ignatius Iparraguirre (Rome: Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu, 1955). 526-30.

Because Francheville was not tied to the Jesuits by vow and there were Jesuits and priests on whose support she could depend, Catherine financed the building of a new house closer to the church of Saint-Solomon. In 1674, Francheville opened and managed, with a small group of "demoiselles" – semi-religious women - the first retreat house in Vannes, France specifically intended as a place where women to go through the Spiritual Exercises. From 1680 till 1694 Jesuits were allowed to act as directors or preachers to the house and Catherine continued to bring groups as large as 300 women at a time to go through the Exercises.

More than creating a center for the spiritual education of women, Catherine de Francheville established what would become the heart of women's retreats. Overseeing all of the practices and coordinating instruction and lectures, Catherine herself spoke almost three hours every day. Using familiar language, her "talks and exhortations touched them more than the sermons of the most skillful preachers."[105] She reached women through familiarity, respect, and concern for them as people. Catherine carefully recruited retreat directors to preach and confess the women who valued the humanity and spiritual needs of women and who would not humiliate the country women for their "coarseness and repetitiveness."

The community of laywomen founded a daughter house in Quimper but were dispersed by the French Revolution. Some came together to found schools and develop communities in England, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands and Italy. These communities developed in the 19th century under the name La Retraite into a religious Congregation of nuns. Though their active involvement in retreats was curtailed in the late 19th century, it re-emerged after the Second Vatican Council. The Community extended into Chile, South Africa, Cameroon, and Mali. These provided the rich soil out of which the tradition of spiritual retreats has grown. By the late 19th- early 20th centuries, multi-day retreats borrowed from Catholic practices were popular around the world and beginning to spread among working classes. These retreats were less ascetic in character and included more conversation and leisure activities.[106]

## Key Voices

God's pattern of working six days and resting on the seventh is a necessary work-rest cycle. "By resting on that first seventh day," theologian Karl Barth has pointed out, "God declared as fully as possible just how very good creation is. Resting, God took pleasure in what had been made; God had no regrets, no need to go on to create a still better world or a creature more wonderful than

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[105] https://brill-com.libproxy.udayton.edu/view/journals/jjs/2/4/article-p659_7.xml?language=en

[106] *Bodington, C. (1905). Devotional Life in the Nineteenth Century. SPCK. p. 176*. Retrieved 11 January 2020.

the man and woman. Part of Sabbath-keeping, following this commandment, is entering into the glad circle of gratitude where this truth is acknowledged. In this glad circle, we know that not our efforts, but God's are the source of life; and we know creation – nature and one another – as gifts to be enjoyed, not as natural or human resources to be used."[107] By embodying Sabbath, we also honor ourselves as imago dei and life as an integral part of God's created order that needs careful tending.

For many, God's invitation to enter into the holiness of Sabbath rest has degenerated into the ritual of going to church. Whether observed on Saturday or Sunday, it does not seem to matter; the delight of rest has become one more thing to check off the to-do list. From school child to senior adult, across all segments of the community, calendars are filled to overflowing with 'good' things. The price is paid in anxiety and stress. Cell phones, tablets, and computers supposed to lighten the load instead contribute to overload as people endlessly use them for work and entertainment.

The practice of keeping Sabbath is an essential tool in an era filled with crises and stress. Yet, as Ringwald writes, "The Sabbath remains the dessert most people leave on the table."[108] Finding solutions to the problems that vex our world will come, not from investing more time and energy in work, but from learning to pull away as Jesus modeled. Abraham Joshua Heschel in The Sabbath: It's Meaning for Modern Man suggests that refraining from work on a regular basis is a way of setting limits on behavior that is perilous for both human welfare and the welfare of earth itself."[109] He adds, "The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; the weekdays are for the sake of Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the climax of living." [110] Alice Walker put it like this, "Anybody can observe the Sabbath, but making it holy surely takes the rest of the week."[111] This harmful pattern of rest-less work produces, according to Gordon MacDonald, restless, dissatisfied people. It is a vicious cycle that glorifies production and vilifies ease as a waste of valuable time and is driven by the very people who work the most and rest the least.[112]

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[107] Dorothy C. Bass, The Practice of Keeping Sabbath in The Living Pulpit. Atlas Series, 16

[108] Quoted by Barbara Baker Speedling in Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time, Journal of Religion and Health, 58, 1382-1400 (2019). Originally from Ringwald, C. (2009). *A day apart: How Jews, Christians, and Muslims find faith, freedom, and joy on the Sabbath*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 1382

[109] Dorothy C. Bass, The Practice of Keeping Sabbath in The Living Pulpit. Atlas Series, 17

[110] Heschel, Abraham Joshua. 1952. *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Company. 14

[111] Walker, Alice. 1983. In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. Orlando: Harcourt Books. 351

[112] MacDonald, Gordon. Ordering Your Private World. Nashville: Oliver-Nelson, 1984. 166, 174

## Women and Sabbath-Keeping

Barbara Baker Speedling's paper, Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time offers an important summary of the benefits of Sabbath-keeping among women. In it, she looks specifically at the transformative benefits for ten women ages 20 - 63 for whom Sabbath was not a part of their common practice. She concluded that Sabbath-keeping is not only a spiritual practice, it can contribute to the well-being of individuals, communities, and the earth. Holistic health studies recognize the important relationship between all aspects of well-being.[113] Her paper highlights current scholarship on psychological, social, physical, spiritual, cultural, and environmental health as well as identifies gaps in the existing research. Six themes emerged that applied to all participants in Speedling's study: "Sabbath-keeping enhanced self-awareness, improved self-care, enriched relationships, developed spirituality, affected the rest of a Sabbath-keeper's week, and Sabbath-keeping practices and philosophies also evolved over time."[114]

The Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University published the findings of a preliminary study on the neurophysiological effects of spiritual retreats on participants. This study, according to the authors, represented the first of its kind that looked specifically at dopamine and serotonin levels of participants undergoing an intensive seven-day spiritual retreat. Though a preliminary study, researchers observed significant changes in several psychological and spiritual measures. Participants especially reported increased levels of spirituality, religiousness, and self-transcendence. [115] These studies, as well as others, document the perceived benefits for immersive, multi-day spiritual retreats, practices associated with strong emotional responses, reduced stress, enhanced well-being, spiritual transformation experiences, and even result in life-changing consequences. (Falkenstrom, 2010, Hood, 1977; Kennedy, Abott, & Rosenberg, 2002).[116]

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[113] Quoted by Barbara Baker Speedling in Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time, Journal of Religion and Health, 58, 1382-1400 (2019) 1382-1383.

[114] Speedling, Barbara Baker in Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time, Journal of Religion and Health, 58, 1382-1400 (2019) 1388-1389.

[115] Newberg, Andrew B, Nancy A Wintering, David B (David Bryce) Yaden, Zhong Li, Brendan Bowen, Noah Averick, and Daniel A Monti. 2018. "Effect of a One-Week Spiritual Retreat on Dopamine and Serotonin Transporter Binding: A Preliminary Study." *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 8 (3): 265–78. doi:10.1080/2153599x.2016.1267035.

[116] Falkenström, F. (2010). Studying mindfulness in Experienced Mediators: A Quasi-Experimental Approach. *Personality and Individual Differences,* 48, 305-310; Hood Jr. R. W. (1977). Eliciting Mystical States of Consciousness With Semistructured Nature Experiences. *Journal of*

For Jews and other Sabbatarians such as Seventh Day Adventists, the Sabbath has always been an integral part of the week. Yet, the ways women 'celebrate' Sabbath Rest, even amongst religious groups, is typically much different than it is for men. Though the 21st century male in different sex households is more involved in labor in the home, women still do more. In addition to paid employment, most working mothers come home to a 'second' job at rates and time investments that far exceed those of working fathers.[117] according to the 2020 women in the workplace study (leanin.org and Mckinsey & co.),[118] working mothers' burnout is very real. The 2020 pandemic exacerbated the issue as lines between work and home were blurred and expectations that employees would be available to employers around the clock increased.[119] considering these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that rest, even on days set aside for that purpose, look different for women.

Penelope Mark-Stuart, in On Women and Sabbath Rest, describes the ways her mother's generation observed Sabbath, finding that, thirty years later not much has really changed. Mothers and grandmothers continue to be guardians of Sabbath, sacrificing their own rest to ensure others are able to participate. Though certain activities such as cleaning were discouraged or banned on the Sabbath, this did not necessarily result in rest for women and older daughters. Cooking special meals, dressing children for church services, entertaining visitors who often dropped by on Sunday afternoons, and in general, caring for little ones could not be put on hold because it was the Sabbath. As a result, women were, and are, likely to be just as tired on Sunday as on any other day of the week.[120]

Since Sabbath observation is deeply connected to the life of the body of believers, it seems logical to expect the church to be more cognizant of ways to ensure its observation. Instead, the church is often complicit in the work-more, rest-less cycle with church calendars filled with activities. Speaking at Omega Baptist Church's celebration of their move into their new church building,

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*Scientific Study of Religion*, 16, 155-163.;Kennedy, J.E., Abbott, R.A., & Rosenberg, B.S. (2002). Changes in Spirituality and Well-being In a Retreat Program For Cardiac Patients. *Alternative Therapies In Health and Medicine*, 8, 64-73. Quoted in Newberg, Andrew B, Nancy A Wintering, David B (David Bryce) Yaden, Zhong Li, Brendan Bowen, Noah Averick, and Daniel A Monti. 2018. "Effect of a One-Week Spiritual Retreat on Dopamine and Serotonin Transporter Binding: A Preliminary Study." *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 8 (3): 265–78. doi:10.1080/2153599x.2016.1267035.

[117] Glynn, Sarah Jane. An Unequal Division of Labor: How Equitable Workplace Policies Would Benefit Working Mothers. Center for American Progress. May 18, 2018. https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2018/05/18/450972/unequal-division-labor/

[118] https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace#

[119] McGinley, Devin. Work-life Balance Is Harder for Women In The Pandemic. November 20, 2020. https://www.investmentnews.com/work-life-balance-harder-women-pandemic-199727

[120] Mark-Stewart, Penelope. On Women and Sabbath Rest. *The Living Pulpit*. 1998. April-June

theologian Leonard Sweet highlighted this practice. According to Sweet, there is a dichotomy between the invitations Jesus and the church offer. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28). The church says, "Come to me and I will give you work."[121] Ryan Burge notes the following in his article, "Behind the Steep Decline in Church Attendance Among Women:"

While societal norms about parenting and professional responsibilities are glacially shifting toward more equality, raising kids is still seen by many to be "women's work." This puts many women in an untenable situation; data indicate that as women have become more involved in the workplace, their responsibilities at both home and church have not abated. The reality is that society is asking women to do it all, but each day still has the same 24 hours.[122]

Not only are women working inside and outside of the home, they continue to have primary responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the family. According to the Barna group, throughout the years, mothers continue to manage faith formation for the family. Mothers are also the ones encouraging church attendance (79%) or teaching kids about the Bible (66%), God's forgiveness (66%) and religious traditions (72%). Moms carry a large share of the logistical, emotional and spiritual weight at home, [123]

Feeling totally overwhelmed, church attendance appears to be one of the easiest things to take out of the schedule. Rather than a place of ease and refreshment, the demands of church involvement for women and their children contributes to busyness and stress. Church programming may be based on unrealistic assumptions about working parents' schedules. Sermons may not even speak to women's actual experiences. Participation in areas of ministry often feels like more of a hindrance than a help.[124]

## Retreats As A Partial Solution

We are every day becoming aware of the costs of a life without rest. Increasingly, social workers, courts, and probation officers are raising our children, rescuing them from the unintentional wasteland of our hyperactivity. Wayne Muller, Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest

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[121] Leonard Sweet at Omega Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio, December 4, 2004.

[122] Burge, Ryan. Behind the Steep Decline in Church Attendance Among Women. State of The Church 2020. March 4, 2020. https://www.barna.com/changes-behind-the-scenes/.

[123] https://www.barna.com/research/moms-christians-households/

[124] Barna, May 17, 2019, https://www.barna.com/research/moms-christians-households/

While the ultimate goal for all Christians is a return to the regular practice of Sabbath-keeping across all aspects of life, the goal of the NPO is aimed at intentionally creating physical, emotional, spiritual, and structural space for 21st century women.

Women are busy – extremely busy - and there is a name for it. In 2005, Dr. Brent Bost, obstetrician-gynecologist, identified the disorder affecting American women in major proportions, the Hurried Woman Syndrome. According to Dr. Bost, the condition is directly related to stress and impacts over sixty million women between the ages of 25-55. While Dr. Bost admits that there are unavoidable stressors such as a stressful career, a sick relative or excessive responsibility, he maintains that much stress is avoidable and can be better managed. These are the result of normalizing busy, hectic schedules and cluttered lifestyles. Left unattended, Hurried Woman Syndrome can have long-term and far-reaching consequences for the women themselves and those in her care.[125] Mental Health America reports startling statistics about depression, one of the consequences Dr. Bost discusses as symptomatic of Hurried Women Syndrome.

- Approximately 12 million women in the United States experience clinical depression each year and about one in every eight women can expect to develop clinical depression during their lifetime;
- Social factors may also lead to higher rates of clinical depression among women, including stress from work, family responsibilities, the roles and expectations of women and increased rates of sexual abuse and poverty and
- Women experience depression at roughly twice the rate of men. [126]

Judith Duerk, in A Circle of Stones: Woman's Journey To Herself, explains the toll fatigue exacts on women's bodies and souls to the point where some women are actually relieved to contract a horrendous disease so they can, without guilt, get the rest they so desperately need.[127]

Busyness is a harmful, burdensome lifestyle that leaves little room for the joys of life: meaningful conversation, healthy meals, play, hobbies, or peace. As life moves faster, we feel compelled to do more. Lives are not simply overloaded, they are lived in overdrive, rarely in the moment women tend to live ten minutes, two hours or a week into the future. Even when they want to change, to live fully in the present, fear of disappointing others or becoming irrelevant often drive women to

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[125] http://hurriedwoman.com/syndrome.html. For more details see Brent Bost's book, The Hurried Woman : Conquer Fatigue, Achieve Successful Lifelong Weight Management, and Rekindle the Fire in Your Relationships , Vantage Press, 2001. ISBN 0533136199, 222 pgs.

[126] Reported on https://www.mhanational.org/depression-women.

[127] Mark-Stuart, Penelope. On Women and Sabbath Rest. The Living Pulpit. April-June 1998. http://library.mibckerala.org/lms_frame/eBook/pauline%20chro/sabth/sabbath%201.pdf

say yes when no is more appropriate. Or, they may simply be too busy to stop, (re)assess, and make the necessary changes.[128]

The NPO project posits that, for many women, the opportunity to step away for an extended period of time may be one of the most effective strategies for facilitating the reduction of women suffering from Hurried Woman Syndrome. Multi-day retreats create an opportunity for participants to explore new ways of being, gain fresh perspectives on her life, and engage in experiences that nourish the soul. "To go on retreat is to have already taken the decision to set time apart from everyday distractions; to gather the attention for a period of time. The very context and atmosphere of a retreat is designed so that the mind can find the place in the heart."[129]

The 2019 article, "Spiritual Retreats As A Restorative Destination: Design Factors Facilitating Restorative Outcomes," is the first study to present design factors for restorative spiritual retreats and will provide the foundation for further NPO research.[130]

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[128] Valorie Burton has written a wonderful book, How Did I Get So Busy: The 28-Day Plan To Free Your Time, Reclaim Your Schedule, and Reconnect with What Matters Most. New York: Broadway Books. 2007. Burton is clear that the book is not another time-management tool. Rather, it invites the reader to look deeply into what currently captures her time and efforts and directs her to make important value choices.

[129]Housden, 15. The full quote Is "The Resting Place Of The Mind Is The Heart. The Only Thing The Mind Hears All Day Is Clanging Bells And Noise And Argument, And All It Wants Is Quietude. The Only Place The Mind Will Ever Find Peace Is Inside The Silence Of The Heart. That's Where You Need To Go." Elizabeth Gilbert, Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search For Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia. (2007). Riverhead Books

[130] Chelsea Gill, Jan Packer, Roy Ballantyne, Spiritual retreats as a restorative destination: Design factors facilitating restorative outcomes, Annals of Tourism Research, Volume 79, 2019.

# SECTION 3: SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

So many of us say, 'If only I could take a break, if only I could get away.' Here's your excuse: God told you to. We often criticize ourselves, friends, or colleagues for acting as if the world rested on our shoulders, for thinking we are God, that the world spins around us, and that we have to take care of everything ourselves. In fact, the person who stops once a week imitates a God who made the world and then ceased. (Christopher Ringwald, 2009)[131]

After this stage of research, I am even more certain there exists a huge need waiting to be addressed, starting first with women and ultimately extending to all. Women, around the globe, and since the beginning of time, have had a central role in society. Though often undervalued, underpaid, unseen or celebrated, women have ensured the progress, stability, and development of nations. Women remain the primary caretakers of children and elders, act as family manager, lead educator and either sole or co-supporter financially. In the church, though the lion's share of church leaders are men, women are often the primary financial supporters and workers who keep the church going. The latter is easy to understand; there are more women in church than men. What this means for women, beyond the inequity of fewer leadership positions, is a greater burden in carrying out the church's mission added to plates already filled to overflowing.[132]

For Christians, this paradigm is antithetical to the call of Jesus, the sweet invitation to enter into rest for the soul. (Matthew 11:29b) Rather than being a task-master who demands total time and attention go to work, Jesus calls people into relationship, one that is developed and nurtured in periods of rest. Research is clear that, in general, there is a major disconnect between Sabbath Rest and North American lifestyles which are characterized as overfilled and overly busy. Research is also clear that busyness creates health problems. Yet parenthetically, rather than causing people to deliberately slow their paces, busyness seems to fuel more of the same. This constant pursuit of activity exists across all of ages and spectrums of life, from the home to corporate offices and even

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[131] Quoted by Barbara Baker Speedling in Celebrating Sabbath as a Holistic Health Practice: The Transformative Power of a Sanctuary in Time, Journal of Religion and Health, 58, 1382-1400 (2019) 1382-1383.

[132] As reported in Eileen R. Campbell-Reed's report, *State of Clergywomen in the U.S.: A Statistical Update*, though there hasn't been a comprehensive study on U.S. women clergy for two decades, there have been measurable changes. For instance, in the United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalist denominations, the numbers of men and women clergy is the same. Women still cannot be ordained by the Roman Catholic Church or the Southern Baptist Convention. She states a significant difference in African American Baptist congregations where women comprise 50-75% of the congregations but are less than 10% pastors. In the African Methodist Episcopal Church approximately 26% of the pastors are women. https://eileencampbellreed.org/state-of-clergy/

the church which should be the model of a balanced work-rest cycle. Instead, the sheer speed of contemporary life and continually growing demands often leave people feeling separated from God, themselves and others. For women, this has led to the Hurried Woman Syndrome, an inability to live fully in the moment and serious battles with illnesses such as depression.

On the positive side, research verifies the indisputable connection between Sabbath observance into which people intentionally and regularly enter and improvement in mental, physical, and emotional health. Most of the research focuses on communities for whom Sabbath observance is an intrinsic value. Sabbatarians such as Seventh Day Adventists and the Jewish community have built-in social and religious mechanisms that support a lifestyle of regular Sabbath-keeping. Though there are fewer research studies detailing the benefit for non-Sabbatarians, the writings of authors such as Parker Palmer, Richard Swenson, Barbara Holmes, and Lynn Baab highlight the power of regular, on-going time for reflection and rest. Sabbath keeping and margin-making enhance self-awareness, positively impacts and enriches relationships with self and others, and provides a fertile ground for spiritual development.

Retreats, especially those occurring over multiple days, are the perfect introduction to and extension of Sabbath Rest. Because people are strung so tightly, it takes time to uncoil. Retreats challenge the productivity mindset and lead people to the physical and emotional space where rest and reflection become possible. Similar to Sabbath-keeping, retreats invite individuals to notice the majestic work of God, to listen to and interrogate their own thoughts and feelings while they (re)orient their work within the purpose for which they were born. Retreats empower participants to develop internal resources while establishing connections with others on similar journeys.

## Tensions and Gaps

For hundreds of years retreats were primarily a spiritual practice designed for the purpose of helping people learn more about God and grow in their spiritual walks. While these remain fundamental reasons to retreat, since the late 19$^{th}$ and early 20$^{th}$ centuries retreats amongst the working class and those outside of Christianity have grown exponentially. Spiritual retreats within non-Christian religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, continue to grow in number and influence. Likewise, health, wellness and integrative wellness retreats are gaining in popularity. While there are spiritual components to nearly all of these retreats, the level and types of activities vary greatly and most include some type of leisure activity and offer a variety of communication experiences.

Though there are thousands of retreats, all extolling benefits for women, they are mostly anecdotal and not rooted in hard data. Scholars are beginning to explore the benefits of retreats for women with life-threatening illnesses. Emerging studies on the efficacy of retreats include one that looked at the benefit of a retreat for low-income women with breast cancer and another that examined the benefits of a retreat for a group of homeless women. The latter developed into the Ignatious

Spirituality Project (ISP) which immerses participants, especially those recovering from addictions and living in transitional housing. A DePaul University pilot study published in 2015 performed an initial study to assess the impact of the multiday retreat on levels of loneliness and addictions leading to a broader longitudinal study. Each of these shows promising results and point to areas of potential impact for the development of a retreat center.

While there are studies on the connection between overwork and mental and physical health, there does not appear to be significant resources or systemic solutions that make possible much-needed changes in life-styles that value productivity. Generally speaking, the ability to take advantage of retreats of any length remains a luxury for people with a certain level of income or privilege. For women already feeling over-worked and under-resourced, the idea of attending a retreat often dies in seed form. There remains a dearth of literature about creating the practical aspects of creating sacred space and retreat centers, how to fund them, and ways to make the space accessible to all women, not just those who are resourced. If the goal is to develop a strategic plan for space where women can attend to themselves in ways that are (re)generative, healing, and refreshing, there remain extremely important questions to be investigated and answered.

# Appendix C–Milestone 3 Design Workshop Report

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## NPO STATEMENT

Adjusted NPO Statement: I want to create (a) space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

## NPO SCOPE AND CONSTRAINTS

By the end of the doctoral program, I plan to develop a strategic plan for space to help women attend to themselves in ways that are (re)generative, healing, and refreshing. I began this journey with the idea of establishing a retreat center. However, through the workshop processes, I am seeing possibilities for stages that lead to the eventual full-service center. I look forward to prototyping one or two of the three emergent concepts in order to estimate the exact scope and costs associated with the final product. Extent, boundaries, and costs will be evaluated and incorporated as the process progresses.

## NPO CONTEXT

The NPO project is not aligned with any particular denomination, church, or culture. Whatever the final project becomes will operate under the auspices of my 501c3 ministry, Doxology Ministries International, Inc. (DMI). DMI is a nondenominational ministry whose mission is to empower people to transform their lives and positively impact families and communities through the application of Biblical principles and practical wisdom. DMI operates as a parachurch ministry, supporting the work of the local church and ministering to the 'unchurched.' Both fall 2020 and 2021 workshops reveal the need for all women, not just 'church' or 'Christian' women, to have space – physical and otherwise - where they can retreat as well as be offered resources for continual renewal. This makes DMI the logical entity out of which the NPO will operate.

## ROOT CAUSES

The Design Workshop and One-x-One interviews confirmed the findings from the Discovery Workshop. Despite living through the height of a pandemic that brought the world to a standstill, our culture remains steeped in the narrative valuing busyness above nearly everything else. This pervasive value system impacts women in dishonoring ways. First, busyness covers feelings of unworthiness, insecurities, and makes it difficult to fully understand who God created them to be. Second society devalues women; there seems to be an inability to recognize what women bring to the table. As a result, women do not always honor themselves. Instead, they internalize outside voices above their own voices or that of the Creator. Third, When women do not value themselves

as God's highest form of creation, they are distracted and barely have time or energy to think about (re)generation, personal healing, being refreshed. Self becomes such a low priority that women do not have or make time to do things that help them fulfill their purpose.

## ***THREE BIG IDEAS***

4. Create a Retreat-In-A-Box (RIAB): People would purchase the box containing supplies needed to create what they need to create their own retreat experiences in their homes or with groups of their own choosing.
5. Use existing facilities and/or build collaborations with others to host on-going retreats.
6. Rent or buy a building to be used for a variety of retreat experiences. This would be the first-step and testing ground for a future, fully operative retreat center.

## ***DEFINITION OF 'DONE'***

The ultimate goal, at the end of the program, is to have a definite plan for creating space for women's healing, regeneration, and refreshing.

## ***3 CONCEPT PITCHES***

| **Area** | **Concept 1** |
|---|---|
| *Big Idea:* This is one of your three big ideas that you want to prototype. | Create a Retreat-In-A-Box/Sacred Space At Home Kit that provides necessary supplies and instructions to help women develop the practice of personal Sabbath Rest. The name will develop through the prototyping process. |
| *Audience:* For whom is this intended? | It is designed for any woman wanting to experience an in-person retreat but might not have the option, whether because of location, costs, or personal circumstances. |
| *NPO*: What is the unmet need/problem/opportunity we are addressing? | In-person retreats can be costly and inconvenient, if not impossible, for lower income women or those with other responsibilities. This concept removes many of the obstacles. |
| *Benefit*: How does the user benefit? | This concept empowers women to create sacred space for themselves in the privacy of their homes, in local parks, or other places that speak to them. Users also have the possibility of creating their own healing communities using the kits as pre-planned retreats. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Approach*: What is our approach to meeting that need, and how is it novel? Illustrate or describe how it works. | This approach takes the guesswork out of creating sacred space and addressing the NPO. For a nominal price, compared to in-person retreats, users would receive materials and instructions that lead to deep reflection.<br>Purchasers would receive a kit containing things needed to create a personal retreat. The box might include something users can taste, touch, hear, read, smell, as well as journaling prompts and a themed journal. |
| *Risks*. Why might it fail? | Several of the risks are related to users. In-person retreats remove distractions as well as most of the responsibilities related to planning and execution. People may struggle with commitment and competing priorities. On my end, there is the possibility that kits are not interactive enough or lacks a way for people to engage in on-going reflection. These are things that must be considered carefully during the prototyping. |
| *Assumptions*/hypotheses to test: What *specifically* are you testing to figure out if it does or doesn't work? | I am testing to determine if at-home kits would be a beneficial alternative to in-person retreats and workshops as a pathway to healing or internal growth. |
| *Benchmarks of success*: What information do you need to either confirm or disprove your hypothesis? | Survey women re: what they would like to see in boxes<br>Cost analysis for products to be included<br>Put together mock boxes determine the cost of production and mailing<br>Evaluate other subscription services for how they work, general costs |
| *Benchmarks of success*: Articulate the 2-3 benchmarks (or indicator, clue, criteria, test, metric, or milestones) that verify that the project is successfully addressing the NPO. | If one woman is helped by this concept, I will count it as a success. However, as a business model, benchmarks are necessary. The following are three I anticipate using:<br>1. Positive testimonials and feedback<br>2. People purchase the boxes and use them<br>3. Word of mouth promotion, sharing or purchasing boxes for others |
| *Other Approaches*: How are others addressing this NPO? What sets this approach apart? | There are books that proport to guide people through personal retreats. There are also boxes on the market that, at first glance, appear to be similar. However, these are mostly boxes of products. The goal for this concept will be to provide enough guidance so that women can recreate a life-empowering experience. This will include access to me or another leader to help walk users through the retreat experience. I envision developing multiple processes to make this possible. |

| **Area** | **Concept #2** |
|---|---|
| *Big Idea:* This is one of your three big ideas that you want to prototype. | Use Existing Spaces/Collaborate with other organizations to provide retreats that meet the NPO |
| *Audience:* For whom is this intended? | Women who want to experience connection with other women and God in a safe and authentic way. It is also for any woman who feels comfortable being in-person while we remain in a pandemic era providing directed time and experiences. |
| *NPO*: What is the unmet need/problem/opportunity we are addressing? | This concept creates space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves. |
| *Benefit*: How does the user benefit? How do you benefit? | Users benefit from being in-person, engaged and connected to other women while getting away from their everyday roles and responsibilities. I benefit through developing partnerships with people who either have facilities or access to women who need this value. |
| *Approach*: What is our approach to meeting that need, and how is it novel? Illustrate or describe how it works. | Truthfully, this concept is not necessarily novel. I currently host retreats for women using existing retreat centers in the Dayton, Cincinnati area. Forming on-going collaborations with other organizations or establishing with centers across the country is new for me. |
| *Risks*. Why might it fail? 25 words. | There is a "hype" theory that, while going to exciting and powerful in-person events is incredibly stimulating and moving, once people return to daily life, and the emotions wear off, changes are hard to maintain. As well, using existing centers often restricts scheduling and shapes the kinds of events possible and costs are difficult to control. Forming collaborations is time-consuming and sets up additional sets of criterion, some of which may not be consonant with the NPO. |
| *Assumptions*/hypotheses to test: What *specifically* are you testing to figure out if it does or doesn't work? | I am testing the feasibility of meeting the NPO objective using existing facilities and/or through developing collaborations with community organizations. While partnerships may be necessary with all three concepts, it will be important to make sure that developing the kinds of partnerships necessary for |

| | |
|---|---|
| | this concept do not overshadow the NPO itself and become the goal. |
| *Benchmarks of success*: What information do you need to either confirm or disprove your hypothesis? | Benchmarks:<br>1. What are the potential opportunities to collaborate with organizations such as The Linda Vista Project or the penal system. In what ways would these collaborations enhance or create barriers for addressing the NPO?<br>2. What are the available retreat facilities in the area with all of the associated costs and criterion for use?<br>3. What is the impact of COVID and the pandemic on collaborations and use of existing facilities? |
| *Benchmarks of success*: Articulate the 2-3 benchmarks (or indicator, clue, criteria, test, metric, or milestones) that verify that the project is successfully addressing the NPO. | Benchmarks<br>1. High level of in-person engagement<br>2. Positive feedback on surveys, willingness to attend other retreats and word-of-mouth promotion<br>3. Participation in after-retreat assignments and journaling |
| *Other Approaches*: How are others addressing this NPO? What sets this approach apart? | This is the approach most churches and individuals currently use; few actually own facilities because of the costs. The option of creating partnerships or collaborations with other organizations has tremendous promise. However, of the three concepts, this is my least favored one because of the necessary investment of time, energy and resources not directly related to addressing the NPO. |

| **Area** | **Concept #3** |
|---|---|
| *Big Idea:* This is one of your three big ideas that you want to prototype. | Rent or buy a building or house that will allow on-going retreats and workshops |
| *Audience:* For whom is this intended? | Women who want to experience connection with other women and God in a safe and authentic way. |
| *NPO*: What is the unmet need/problem/opportunity we are addressing? | This concept creates space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves. |
| *Benefit*: How does the user benefit? | They get the advantage of being in a true retreat environment with more amenities and the ability to really |

| | |
|---|---|
| | step away from everything in order to prioritize their self and spiritual care. Having such a facility increases the opportunities for people to explore the practice of Sabbath rest in familiar settings. |
| *Approach*: What is our approach to meeting that need, and how is it novel? Illustrate or describe how it works. | Rent or purchase a home or building that can be used for retreats and workshops without overnight stays. This concept provides a more permanent structure that would make it possible to design space with full mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health in mind. Furthermore, it makes it possible to create space that with accessibility, diverse images and other cultural representation so users 'see' themselves represented so they can focus on spiritual health. |
| *Risks*. Why might it fail? | Most of the potential for failure rests in issues related to funding and staff:<br>Lack of exposure/marketing<br>Inability to meet costs of operation vs income<br>Lots of moving pieces<br>Availability and cost of space<br><br>Beyond those, other issues surface:<br>Creating enough participants to keep the retreat center busy.<br>Topics not intriguing or relevant<br>Losing sight of the primary vision/NPO through expanded offerings. |
| *Assumptions*/hypotheses to test: What *specifically* are you testing to figure out if it does or doesn't work? | I am testing the potential benefits of renting or owning space to more ably address the NPO and have deeper impact on frequent users of the facility. |
| *Benchmarks of success*: What information do you need to either confirm or disprove your hypothesis? | To make this concept viable there remains extensive research on real estate, insurance, zoning, marketing, finances, operations/employee relations. Related to this are building a solid support team and writing successful grants. |
| *Benchmarks of success*: Articulate the 2-3 benchmarks (or indicator, clue, criteria, test, metric, or milestones) that verify that the project is successfully addressing the NPO. 25 words. | Benchmarks:<br>Addresses the NPO directly in quantifiable ways<br>Growing participation of the local community in workshops and retreats<br>Positive and instructive feedback on survey instruments. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *Other Approaches*: How are others addressing this NPO? What sets this approach apart? | There are multiple retreat centers within 100 miles of Dayton, primarily Catholic, and all offering overnight or day retreats. Many also rent space to outside organizations. I have been using existing retreat spaces myself for over twenty years. This concept differs in that it is intended to operate on a smaller scale since there is currently no major organization underwriting its activities. This concept imagines a smaller facility with the ability to host small group gatherings on an on-doing basis. This facility would intentionally seek to display images and cultural artifacts that allow users to "see" themselves in the physical space. |

## ***DESIGN WORKSHOP STAKEHOLDERS***

Six women participated in the Design Workshop.

1. Mid-20s: nurses aid, African American, single
2. Mid-30s: public school teacher, Caucasian, married
3. Late-30s: life coach, Caucasian, former pastor, married, mother of 2 daughters and one son
4. Late-30s: minister, fitness coach, divorced, mother of two boys
5. Late-50s: campus pastor, ordained minister, Caucasian, divorced, mother of one boy
6. Early 60s: college administrator, African American, never married

## ***ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS***

1. Late-50s: former bank executive, African American, married, two children
2. Mid-50s: college professor and Endowed Chair in Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, married, one child
3. Late-60s: former Executive Director of local YWCA, African American

## ***ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY***

Andonova, Yana, Anaza, Nwamaka, and Bennett, Delancy. "Riding The Subscription Wave: Understanding The Landscape, Challenges, and Critical Success Factors of the Subscription Box Industry." *Business Horizons*. Volume 64, Issue 5. 2021. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2021.02.02

Riding The Subscription Wave provides a detailed look at the subscription box industry (SBS) in order to provide a framework for understanding the challenges and opportunities for this growing industry. The authors present a framework for understanding the SBS landscape based upon core marketing elements. They call these the 4Cs of SBS: categories, consumer benefits, customers, and the competitive landscape. They maintain that any company planning to offer subscription services must comprehend these as well as the five tenets for successfully managing SBS: leveraging social media influencers, offering bricks and clicks/partnering with retail outlets, rewarding faithful customers, increasing perceptions of convenience, and increasing perceptions of value. This article contains valuable information that needs to be more fully explored and digested as I move to the prototyping stage. One idea that rang especially true is the contention that survival in a potentially hyper-competitive market requires that competitors demonstrate "an unduplicable sustainable edge over other competitors (Henderson, 1983)."

Bray, Jeffrey, Kanakaratne, M. De Silva, Dragouni, J. Douglas. "Thinking Inside the Box: An Empirical Exploration Of Subscription Retailing." *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*

Volume 58. 2021. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102333.

While focusing on the United Kingdom market, the authors of "Thinking Inside The Box" focus on issues important to any organization considering joining the subscription services marketing fray. Subscription retailing has been around for many years but has taken an upsweep in the past ten years. This article probes attitudes, opinions and behaviors of 1356 consumers in the UK. This focus is particularly important because there exists few such studies. Subscription series products are extremely diverse. It follows that the reasons people support particular services are also diverse. Authors report that a small number of recent studies have begun examining consumer views, notably attempting to account for engagement (Bhatt and Kim, 2018; Ramkumar and Woo, 2018; Tao and Xu, 2018a, 2018b). However, these do not account for differences between types of subscription types. Of particular importance at this early stage of the NPO concept is found in the motivation section of the article. Convenience, described by respondents as 'taking the hassle out of things,' and ease of use were the two most widely cited motives for utilizing subscription retailing services. Another prominent motive for using subscription products was value for money. This article is important for future study as it also offers a literature review of key research in this growing field.

Strayhorn, Terrell. "Measuring the Effects of COVID-19 on Women's Daily Lives and Well-Being: A National Survey's Preliminary Results." *Academia Letters*. No. 4133. 2021.

https://doi.org/10.20935/AL4133

This article confirms the prevailing belief that the pandemic exacerbated the issue as lines between work and home were blurred and expectations that employees would be available to employers around the clock increased.[133] Using a national online, cloud-based platform, Strayhorn enrolled over 1200 participants in the study which is ongoing. Two questions framed the study: what impact did COVID-19 have on women's work-family and life activities/duties and the relationship between covid-19 related changes and women's perceived well-being. At the time of the article, he analyzed just under half of that number. A significant portion of women in the sample reported changes that negatively impacted their feelings of well-being. They reported being stressed, lonelier than usual, and feeling overwhelmed. There was also a connection between these feelings and women's use of alcohol and drugs. Strayhorn's study as well as other emerging studies hypothesize that the effects of COVID-19 on mental health and wellbeing may be acute, significant, and long-lasting. This data is very important to addressing the NPO.

[133] McGinley, Devin. Work-life Balance Is Harder for Women In The Pandemic. November 20, 2020. https://www.investmentnews.com/work-life-balance-harder-women-pandemic-199727

## ***APPENDICES***

### ***DESIGN WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION***

I held the Design Workshop on Saturday, October 31, 2021 at 211 Stratford Lane, Xenia, OH at 11:30 in the morning. We started with a light meal and time to get acquainted. Including myself as facilitator, there were seven women. The group represented a nice mixture of ages, from early 20s to early 60s. Of the workshop participants, there were three African American women and three White women. No one identified as non-binary, trans or lesbian. Two women were in ministry: one an ordained Methodist pastor and another a former pastor who has deconstructed her belief system. Two are currently married, two divorced, and two single, the elder never having married. The careers were varied: public school teacher, college administrator, nurses' aid, pastor, life coach, and personal trainer/minister. The resulting diversity of workshop participants resulted in lively discussions and varying perspectives. Our discussion could have lasted most of the day, had there been time. I intend to connect with these women often as I work through the project between now and its completion. On scale from one to five with 5 being the strongest, I give the workshop a 4.5. Had we had more time, I would have given it a 5 without hesitation.

I overlooked the Concept Pitch Worksheet during the workshop and am in the process of gathering that information from the participants as well as summarizing that information in preparation for the final report.

## ***DESIGN WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION***

## ***ONE-PAGE POST-WORKSHOP MESSAGE TO STAKEHOLDERS***

**Invitation Letter**

As you know, I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program, Semiotics, Church, and Culture at Portland Seminary and started classes in August. Pray for a sister! It's really exciting and I'm grateful for the opportunity to become even more deeply prepared for ministry in the 21st century. Part of the DMin program is to develop a program or project that fills a Need, Problem, or Opportunity (NPO) for our ministry context. What makes this program different from my previous doctoral studies is that we work on the NPO from the very beginning and have several touch points where we must engage stakeholders. In our first year we held a Discovery Workshop with stakeholders. Information gathered in that workshop provided the basis for research we completed the following semester.

This fall, we are required to host a Design Exploration Workshop with a smaller group of stakeholders. This workshop will use Gamestorming, a set of collaborative, low-tech tools and strategies framed as 'games' that are used to explore ideas, experimenting and examining topics deeply. The games intentionally require participants to work with 'fuzzy' goals, ones not linked to a predetermined outcome. This ensures that we think creatively, imagine, innovate, problem-solve and consider practical ways to engage music and other creative arts as 'sacred spaces' for women. When considering who to ask to participate, I thought of you because I believe you bring an important voice and creativity to this workshop and hope you are able to participate. This is a ONE time commitment. The workshop will be held at my house in Beavercreek.

Please provide the following feedback.

Thank you so much.

Donna Cox

3. Yes, I'm willing to commit.
4. No, I'm unable to commit. May I suggest _____ who you can reach via email at _____ or by text at _____.

If you agree, please indicate as many of these times as you are willing to make yourself available. I will select the date that works best for most people. All times are Eastern Standard Time.

Sunday, October 25: 2:30 pm
Thursday, October 29: 6:00 pm
Saturday, October 31: 9:00 am; 10:00 am; 11:00 am
Sunday, November 1: 2:30 pm

**Thank You Letter**

November 13, 2021

First, thank you so much for your willingness to meet with me and dream about space design for my DMin Needs, Problems, Opportunities (NPO) project. It was such a special time and I wish we had had more time to spend together. In fact, I discovered after the workshop that I missed a step in the workshop, our conversation was so rich. I am attaching that to this email and hope you will be willing to take a few minutes to respond to the questions.

Also attached to this email are summaries from our discussions. I have attempted to place our jottings and information gathered into categories which I've included in chart forms. As you discussed your drawings/musings/thoughts about the following statement, I captured words and concepts.

> NPO: I want to create a space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

I categorized this information into the following categories based on your discussion: Space; Qualities; Actions; Beliefs and Women. I did something similar with the dialogue about what is needed to respond to the NPO statement, categorizing the responses into the following areas: Space: Physical; Space: Other; Qualities and Activities.

I would love for you to take a minute to look through these to see if I missed something important or if you think something should be put into a different category.

Finally, from the discussion of getting to the goal, moving towards a full-service retreat center into three concepts to explore:

1. Retreat In A Box,
2. Using Existing Spaces, and
3. Retreat Center/SHOP (student house of prayer) concept.

This is the area I alluded to in the opening paragraph. I have to develop these ideas into concepts so any information you are able to provide would be greatly appreciated.

I know this is a very busy season for all of you and I hesitate to ask for more time beyond the sacrifice of time already provided. I would appreciate any additional input by November 30, 2021. If you

only have time to look at one thing, it would be that you spend a few minutes on the three concepts. You have already received an invite to the google form.

You are amazing women and so appreciated.

Blessings,

Donna M. Cox

## ***ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS DOCUMENTATION***

Interviews number one and three focused on the three concepts. Our conversation was framed by the afore-mentioned questions. One interviewee was particularly interested in the first concept, that of a retreat kit. This, she thought, was particularly appropriate for people who would be more inclined to use a product that did not require them to travel and afforded flexibility in timing of the retreat and in the associated costs. The other favored the third concept, renting or purchasing a building to use locally. She believed the kit would not work for people like her who needed more accountability, planning and structure to her deeper reflection. In her opinion, people get caught up in the "noise" of life and need space to disconnect and be accountable to others. The third interview focused on potential partnerships with organizations where women have tremendous needs and likely not the resources. For instance, she recommended connecting with The Linda Vista Project, a local community-based non-profit organization that provides housing for single women and homeless mothers. In addition to providing housing for up to two years, Linda Vista helps women improve in multiple ways including job readiness, parenting, education wellness and money management. Working with them to provide retreats seems to be a natural fit.

## ***CONCEPT PITCH INPUT SUMMARIES***

**1st Concept:** **Retreat In A Box/Sacred Space Kit**

**Who is it for:** Specifically for women

- Any woman who would like to experience the closest thing to an in-person retreat but doesn't have the ability for whatever reason.
- Women who may not be available for in-person retreat, whether by location or circumstance.

**How does the user benefit:**

- They get to take advantage of the education, resources, and inspiration provided in the comfort of their own home.
- Being able to still participate in a retreat while not being limited by those locations and circumstances.
- Own personal time & can fit into one's schedule

**Describe How it Works:** Women would receive a fully planned retreat which they would follow at a designated time.

In my mind, I see women on a video call together still participating all at once. It may also be in conjunction with an in-person retreat to reach the most people.

Individuals or formal/informal groups could subscribe to the boxes and decide how and when they want to use the boxes

In-state/out-of-state
Meet around particular needs
Consider different boxes for different audiences
- perimenopausal/menopausal
- working mothers
- younger working women

Could have a zoom gathering as part of the boxes
Subscription boxes 1-2 x a year, seasonal boxes,

Boxes should have something that reaches: taste, touch, smell, feel (hear/read) [process]

Boxes might contain:

- mini bottles of sparkling cider or wine
- cards with prompts, topic or question
- tea
- candle
- book of poems, scripture, inspiration, resource list (post on website)
- health info
- prayer or gratitude journal/prompts. Consider my ART Journal – perhaps use as theme for a box or create a journal for the themed box
- essential oils
- cozy socks
- bath bombs

Decide what kind of retreat: self-care, mindfulness – link to the NPO

Target women's group at local churches, book club groups; small groups so that the church doesn't take the idea and roll with it.

What would women be willing to spend $50 - $100 ? depending on what's in the box?

Men could buy as gifts for wives

**Why might it fail?**

- Life can easily get in the way and distract them from being fully present. Also, the energy of an in person retreat is hard to duplicate in someone's home on their own.
- I think it can be hard to create the same sense of connection over video as in-person. I also think the instructions and price need to be very approachable and easy-to-use
- Competing priorities
- People put boxes to the side and not use
- Easy to get distracted without accountability
- If the box is not interactive enough
- Recipient doesn't have anyone with whom to process after she has completed the retreat (consider private fb group for each box)
- Lack of follow-through
- Physical retreats = captive audiences and people are more apt to participate.

**How might we measure success?**

- Requests for more boxes
- Rating mechanism/way to get input from users

- Questions received from participants
- Participants wanting to include others in
- Testimonials
- Request for frequency increase or expansion of product
- Engagement and follow up surveys

**What makes this a good approach?**

- Relatively low cost, low risk.
- COVID and other issues sometimes limit participation in retreats. This allows women from all walks of life to connect with each other and God.
- Easily accessible and it keeps costs low.
- Great potential to reach, service/meet the needs of more people
- Convenience for participants and producer
- Participant get tools without going to a physical location which requires time and funding
- Time element: can do the retreat at one's leisure
- Participants can gather their own group of retreatants

**What other research needs to be done?**

- Studies on other people who have done this or at least virtual conferences and gain knowledge on what went well and where they feel fell short.
- Researching other people that have used this strategy already, possibly getting feedback from the administrators and users on what they like and what they don't.
- Survey women re: what they would like to see in boxes
- Cost analysis for products
- Put together mock boxes determine the cost of production and mailing
- Evaluate other subscription services for how they work, general costs
- See if there are similar products on the market

**2nd Concept:** **Use Existing Spaces/Collaborate with other organizations**

**Who is it for:** Women who want to experience connection with other women and their higher power in a safe and authentic way.

All women who feel comfortable being in-person right now.

**How does the user benefit:**

- They get the benefit of being in person, engaged and connected to other women while getting away from every day roles and responsibilities in order to be inspired, taught and changed.
- Participants get refreshed without having to do any of the planning or making things happen
- Participants get 'me-time' as well as time with other, like-minded women
    - Private me-time with away-me time
- They make new friendships and renew old acquaintances
- They are legitimately away
- Change of scenery/being in a different space can often change mind/thoughts
- In-person allows for deeper connection
- Intentional, designated time and space for personal reflection & connection with others.

**Describe How it Works:**

- Using existing spaces like homes to host a multi-day retreat experiences for women
- Maybe an air bnb or community church space that would be willing to host? I think that air bnbs with things like a fire pit and/or hot tub will really provide a rejuvenating space
- LOTS of work on my end; can be a headache
- Identify places where retreats can be held; consider establishing relationships with a retreat center in different regions of the US and travel there
- Increases the costs for having the retreat which are passed on to participants
- Consider Air BnB, bring meals in, have group activities around the meal – different groups cooking
- No need to own the space.
- Build relationships with institutions that have space for rent or who might allow the use of the space at no costs

**Why might it fail?**

- There is a "hype" theory in which going to exciting and powerful in person events is incredibly stimulating and moving but once back to daily life, the changes are hard to maintain and the emotions wear off.

- Scheduling conflicts
- Participants might not be able to attend at the times the spaces are available
- Costs associated with the facilities and strings attached may impact the ability of the retreat to meet the NPO
- Lots of moving pieces: facility & services, programming
- Need for a dedicated team
- COVID

**How might we measure success?**

- Engagement there and surveys afterward
- Attendance
- Participation year after year
- Excitement about the event
- Feedback from participants
- Word of mouth promotion
- A survey afterwards and the level of participation in after-retreat assignments/journaling.
- Participation, plus follow-up (2 weeks-1 month later) questions to ask "what sticks?"

**What makes this a good approach?**

- In-person can remove women from daily distractions and allow them to be fully present in the retreat. It can also lead to smaller moments of connection that might be hard to get with a retreat in a box.
- The connection and relationship building has the potential to create a much deeper and more profound impact in the lives of these women.
- Creates familiarity if same space is used each time
- Adds to the specialness of going to a retreat, place where women can be refreshed
- The right facility can make the retreat (Sisters of Charity)
- I know in advance what I'm getting
- Neutral space for people to meet; no territorial ownership over certain churches

**What other research needs to be done?**

- How long is most ideal, what the costs would be, how to break it up for best engagement, and what creates the strongest impact and transformation.
- Availability of facilities
- Cost comparisons
- COVID/pandemic guidelines, restrictions

- Outline types of staff needed
- How do I delegate responsibilities
- What is the team approach needed for success?
- Have I been doing this with the Sabbath Rest Retreats?
- Identifying a space (such as something like Bergamo?) with accessibility, diverse images & cultural representation so people "see" themselves represented in the space, food & other physical needs met so participants can focus on spiritual health.

**3rd Concept:** **Retreat Center or Retreat House**

**Who is it for:** Women who want to experience connection with other women and their higher power in a safe and authentic way.

**How does the user benefit:**

- They get the advantage of being in a true retreat environment with more amenities and the ability to really step away from everything in order to prioritize their self and spiritual care.
- Potential for user to have more input since would be dealing with the owner
- Familiarity
- Increased opportunities
- This would be intentional to travel to a designated space (the commute to the space would be part of the reflection)

**Describe How it Works:**

- Rent or purchase a home or building that can be used for retreats and workshops without overnight stays.
- A more permanent structure would be ideal in order to design the space with full mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health in mind.
- Possibility of renting space to others whose events support the mission
- Finding a space that is warm, nurturing, and alluring and being able to host many groups, maybe not just women's groups.

**Why might it fail?**

- Costs
- Lack of exposure/marketing. Price too high. Topics not intriguing enough.
- Inability to meet costs of operation vs income

- Losing sight of the primary vision/NPO through expanded offerings. Must keep NPO central
- Business risk – can't meet overhead, staffing, maintenance, cleaning
- Lots of moving pieces
- Availability and cost of space, creating enough interest and participation to keep the retreat center busy.

**How might we measure success?**

- Creating interest and participation with women in the community.
- Engagement and surveys
- Meets the NPO
- Bills paid/fiscally sound
- Revenue generated to sustain
- increase in offerings/services
- Feedback
- Repeat users
- Recommend space to others
- Engagement with the space.

**What makes this a good approach?**

- We can use the space solely for our own purposes and have a freedom to create it in the image we would like.
- This actually FEELS like a real retreat. People desire this experience the most when considering a retreat. It feels like you're being pampered more as well and would create the space to host more ladies and more speakers etc.
- Price flexibility
- More control over the product
- Possibility of wider range and types of engagement; greater offerings such as counseling, art therapy, music therapy
- Legitimacy
- Certainty that space is available for things I want done (control of calendar)
- Certainty for clients who would have dates for specific events/offerings well in advance

- **What other research needs to be done?**
- Extensive research on marketing, finances, operations/employee relations
- Could it be a co-opt?
- Underwriters
- Grants

- Zoning
- Costs of doing business
- Real estate availability
- Insurance
- Location, location, location
- Potential partnerships
- Location, cost, how to best market, speakers
- Cost, availability of space, and interest.

## ***DESIGN EXPLORATION WORKSHOP DOCUMENTATION***

**1. Design Exploration Workshop: Explore the NPO.** Sit with the following statement. Step away and just let the words speak to you. Note words, phrases, or concepts that speak to you. Use markers, crayons, colored pencils or anything else to doodle, create, or capture the things that capture your attention or thoughts. (See attached papers from workshop).

I want to create a space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

1b. Discuss what you captured.

1c. Capture ideas from the discussion.

**JOTTINGS from discussion**

- Space within more important than physical
- Warm water
- Cleanse, put things back in order
- Openness, nurturing
- Purple
- Emotional, physical, physiological
- Challenge the should
- Company of women who challenge each other to be, to expect more of self and others
- Challenged – lovingly, helpfully
- Circle: evenness, equality, connection
- Seen, heard
- All women; all beliefs
- God – other words and concepts
- Concept of God is too small
- Power & authority
- Healing – multiple modalities
- Space: cozy energy
- Nature: dirt, trees, sun, air, textures – not found in enclosed spaces
- Creativity
- Radical receiving
- Alignment

- Forgiving self
- Women: carriers of culture; carriers of the burden
- Express how we've changed, how we see and hear
- Template – triptik – destination is God
- Letting go of society's definitions of women
- What about the men?
- Reading leads to writing leads back to reading
- Resilience & vulnerability
- Vulnerability, safety
- Expectations
- Take ownership of what feeds us
- Actions: processing - receiving
- Human DOings instead of human BEings
- Concept of square within a square: group of women around outer square and group of women around inner square
- Masculine energy = hustle , grind
- Question everything
- Mary/Martha as metaphor for work rest cycle
- transition
- Me-centric is not selfish
- "strong" can be toxic when it doesn't allow women to be other than this
- Forgiving self leads to forgiving others
- Letting go!
- Space that transcends location

**2. Where could these things take place? What's needed? Thoughts about 'space.'**

- Confidentiality
- Retreat center with personal and communal spaces: studio, outdoors etc
- Portable
- Flexible
- Inviting
- Safe
- Space to connect in different ways: reading, support group, hikes, social media
- Time – prioritize time
- Ballroom dancing classes
- Cozy
- Mental space
- Meditation space
- 24/7
- Internal
- Anticipation: stuff in mind, spirit, heart
- Getting there mentally (prep)

- Massage table
- Luxurious (butler)
- Affordable
- Is there an app for that?
- Boats – water around
- Trails that lead to water
- Hiking trails
- Library
- Extra-large home on lots of land
- Aromas – essential oils
- Slowing down enough to hear God
- Waterfront
- Backyard
- Cabin-ish in woods
- All-inclusive
- Prioritizing time alone with God and in fellowship
- Bonfire on beach
- Coffee shop
- Wine bar
- Fireplace gathering
- Outdoors
- Homes/homes
- Intimate
- Retail therapy

**Additional Processing**

Release weekly journal prompts or a month of prompts after event
Keep the retreat going once home
Private Facebook groups

**3. GETTING TO THE GOAL:** If the ultimate goal were to create a fully operable retreat center, what interim solutions might be possible?

1. Virtual experiences: Retreat In A Box (thanks, Kathleen H.) with timed activities
    a. Partner with others
    b. utilize apps that are on the market already
2. Use existing spaces
3. Eliminate need for sleeping and have day retreats
4. Rotate spaces with other people
5. Use nature/outside spaces
6. Leverage the community
7. 'tented' experiences: "glamping", portable, affordable

8. Rent Air BnB
9. Partner with local churches for space. Ex. Payne Seminary
10. Find ways to incorporate people who cannot attend virtually
11. Podcasts
12. Use my current home as space.

    **Important Question:** How will Donna take care of herself when she opens herself and her home to others? Hire someone to do the things she cannot do or shouldn't be doing.

    Clear energy after people leave.

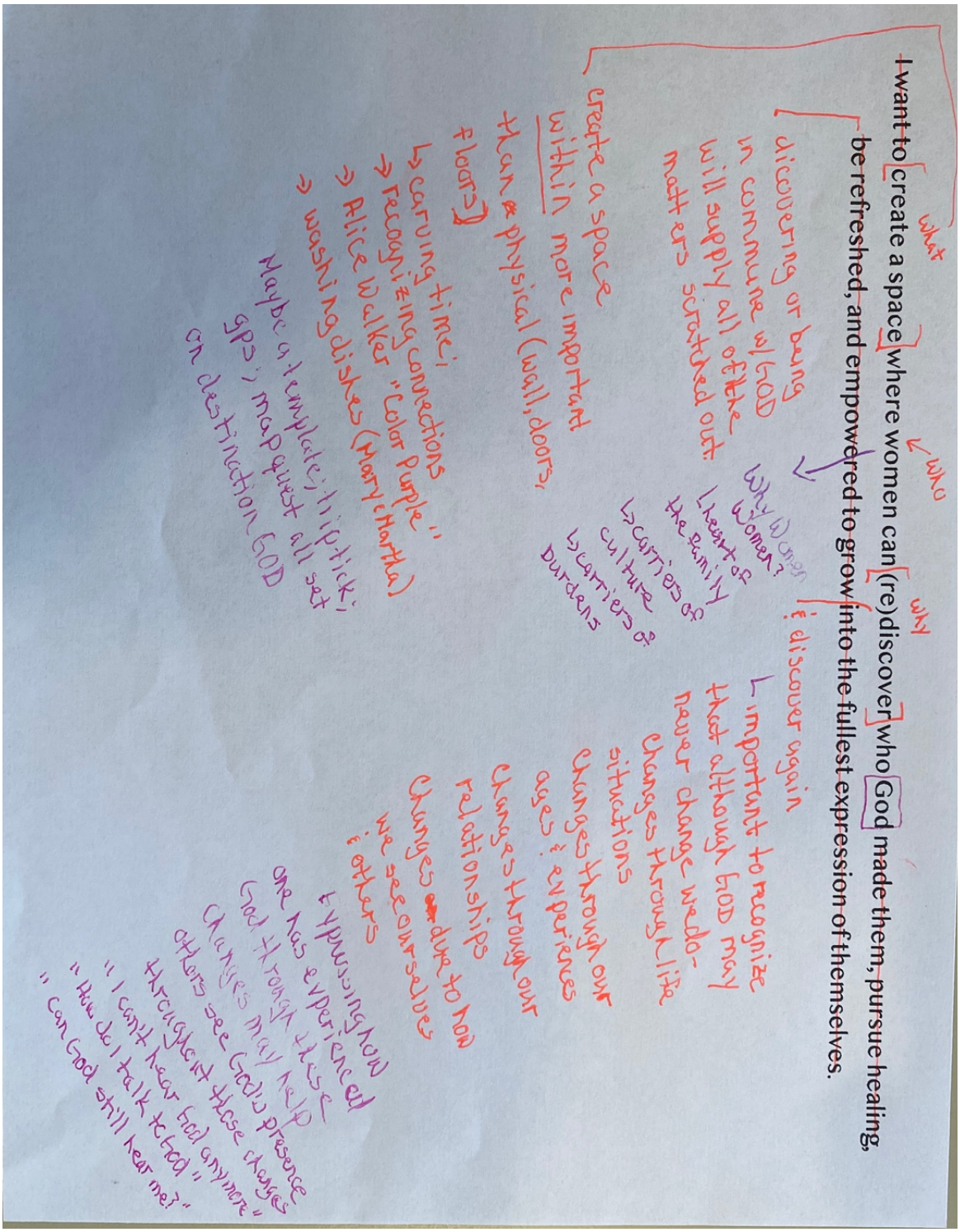
13. FULL-SERVICE RETREAT CENTER

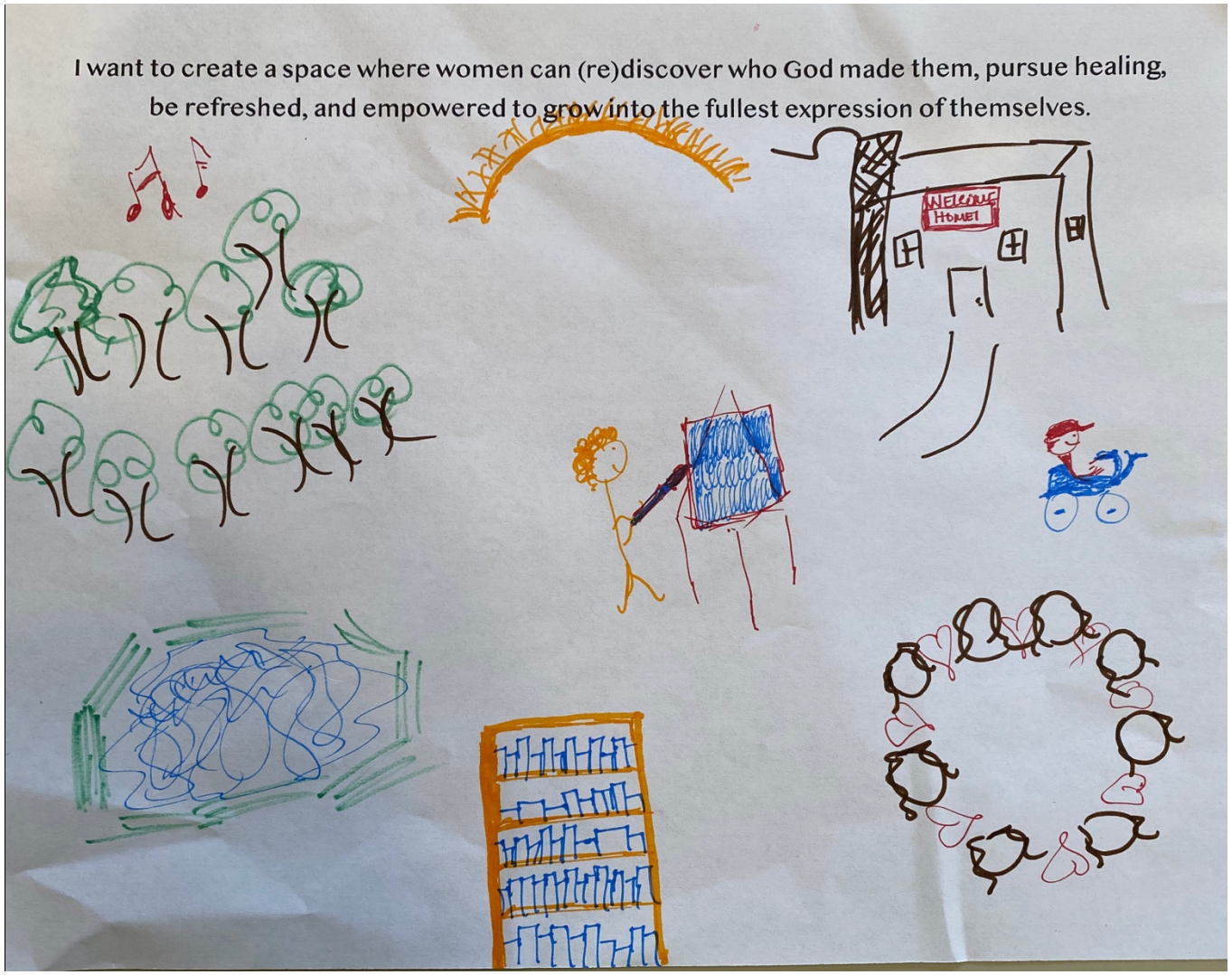
**Scripture given to me by members of the group to help me Believe For It!**

I will stand at my guard post and station myself on the tower; and I will keep watch to see what He will say to me, and what answer I will give [as His spokesman] when I am reproved. Then the LORD answered me and said, "Write the vision and engrave it plainly on [clay] tablets so that the one who reads it will run. "For the vision is yet for the appointed [future] time. It hurries toward the goal [of fulfillment]; it will not fail. Even though it delays, wait [patiently] for it, because it will certainly come; it will not delay. Hab. 2:1-4 AMP

And then GOD answered: "Write this. Write what you see. Write it out in big block letters so that it can be read on the run. This vision-message is a witness pointing to what's coming. It aches for the coming—it can hardly wait! And it doesn't lie. If it seems slow in coming, wait. It's on its way. It will come right on time. Hab. 2: 2-4 MSG

## *IMAGES FROM EXPLORING THE NPO*



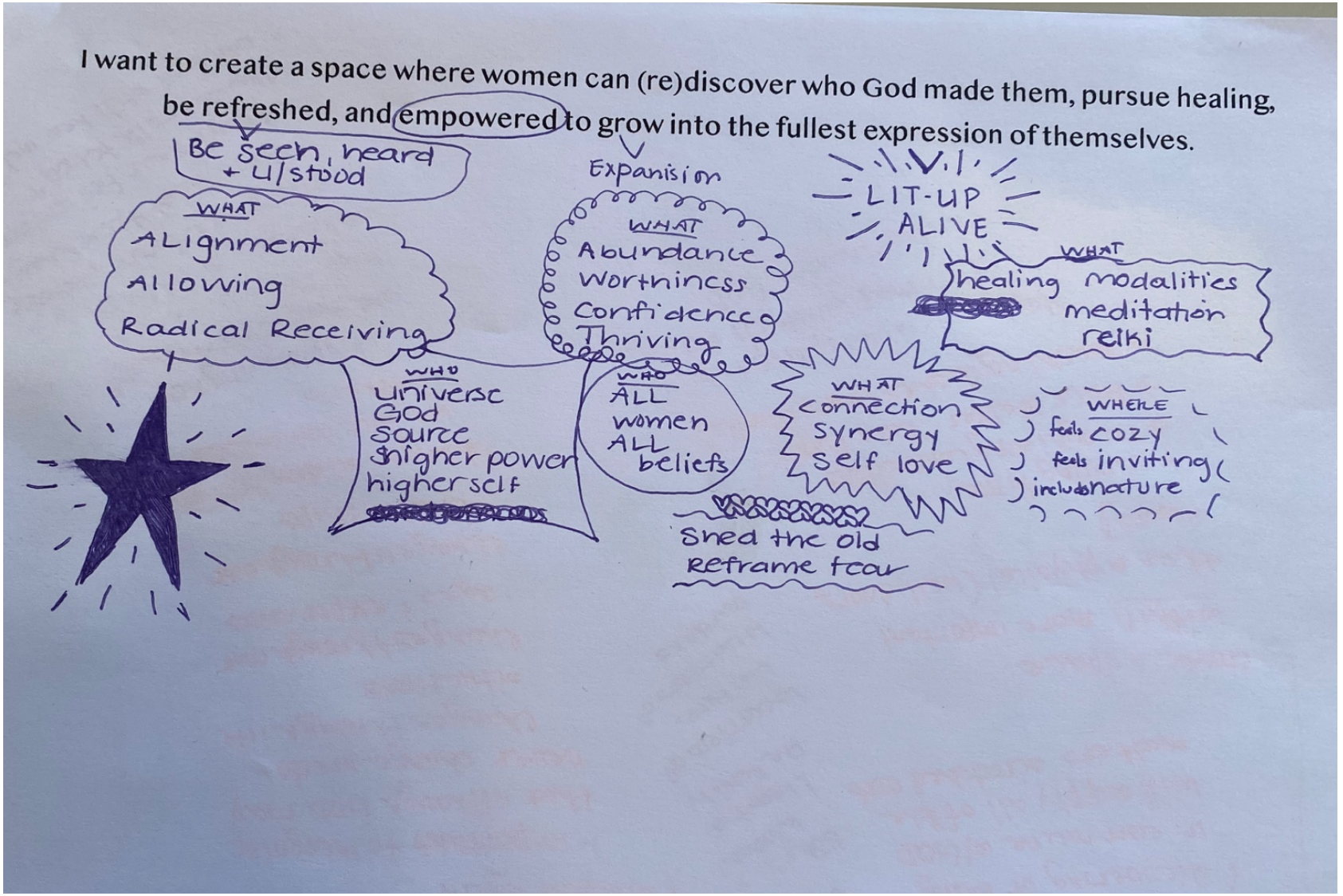

I want to create a space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing,
be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.
WELCOME HOME!



230

231

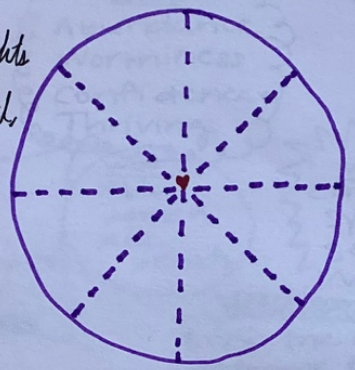
I want to create a space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.



232

I want to create a space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

- open - where the ~~strenght~~ strength of our sisters is an asset, not a threat.
- nurturing - a place where our thoughts can be challenged in a respectful, ~~loving~~ and constructive way
- space to grow (woman)
  - emotional space
  - physical space
  - psycological space
  - spiritual space



- challenge the "shoulds"
- ~~prioritize ourselves instead of the needs of others~~
- clear and honest communication
- **Be brave and bold**
- **a place of support** to share our pursuit of God and gather ideas, inspiration, and strength from other women.
- a place of equality (circle)

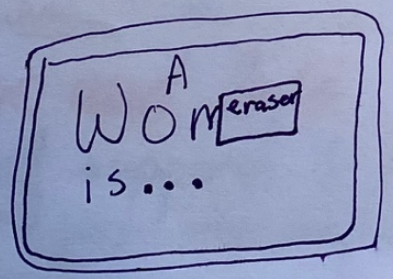
233

I want to create a space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

Clean slate. Letting go of society's definition or expectations. Forgiving self and others. Question everything!

Resting in God is a beautiful dance, like ballroom dance where God is the lead and I follow, not trying to anticipate the next step. Being who God created me to be doesn't equate to society's definition of who a woman should be. Unlearning and trusting your instinct (Holy Spirit). Forgive ourselves for not being true to ourselves in an attempt to satisfy others definition of woman. Forgive others for their expectations.

Freedom!




Safe to be me unapologetically

Empowerment!

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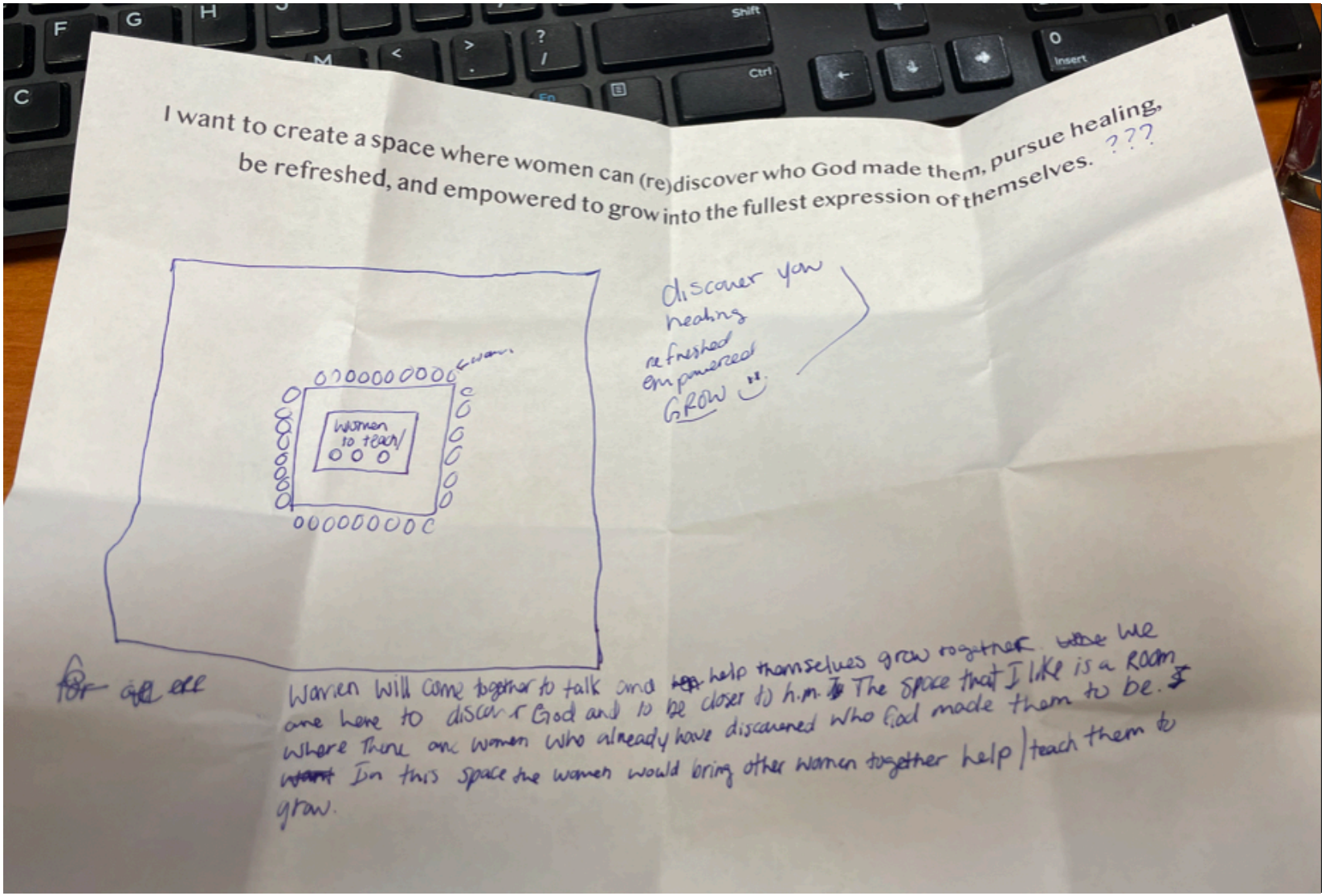

I want to create a space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves. ???



discover you
healing
refreshed
empowered
GROW

for all ele

Women will come together to talk and help themselves grow together. Where we are here to discover God and to be closer to him. The space that I like is a room where there are women who already have discovered who God made them to be. In this space the women would bring other women together help/teach them to grow.

**Design Workshop Game #1 & Discussion:** React to the following Needs, Problem, Opportunity Statement: I want to create (a) space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

| Space | Qualities | Actions | Beliefs | Women |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Space within more important than physical | Openness, nurturing | Challenge the 'shoulds' | Power & authority | Women: carriers of culture; carriers of the burden |
| Warm water Cleanse, put things back in order | Purple | Creativity | God – other words and concepts Concept of God is too small | Letting go of society's definitions of women |
| Emotional, physical, physiological | Company of women who challenge each other to be, to expect more of self and others | Radical receiving; processing & receiving | Template – triptik – destination is God | Mary/Martha as metaphor for work rest cycle |
| Circle: evenness, equality, connection | Be challenged – lovingly, helpfully | Alignment | Reading leads to writing leads back to reading | Human DOings instead of human BEings |
| Concept of square within a square: group of women around outer square and group of women around inner square | Seen, heard | Forgive self | Expectations | Masculine energy = hustle , grind |
| Space: cozy energy | Healing – multiple modalities | Resilience, vulnerability, safety | Question everything | "strong" can be toxic when it doesn't allow |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | women to be other than this |
| Nature: dirt, trees, sun, air, textures – not found in enclosed spaces | safety | Take ownership of what feeds us | Me-centric is not selfish | All women; all beliefs |
| Space that transcends location | transition | | Forgiving self leads to forgiving others | |
| | | | Letting go! | What about the men? |

Design Workshop Game 2: Space – What's Needed

| Space: Physical | Space: Other | Qualities | Activities |
|---|---|---|---|
| Retreat center with personal and communal spaces: studio, outdoors etc | Time – prioritize time (readiness) | Confidentiality | Ballroom dancing classes |
| Space to connect in different ways: reading, support group, hikes, social media | Mental space | Portable | Anticipation: stuff in mind, spirit, heart |
| Water (boats, hiking trails that lead to water) | Internal space (readiness) | Flexible | Slow down enough to hear God |
| Trails | Aromas: essential oils | Inviting | Prioritizing time alone with God and in fellowship |
| library | Coffee shop | Safe | Retail therapy |
| Meditation space | Wine bar | cozy | Fireplace gatherings |
| Extra-large home on lots of land | Bonfire (on beach) | 24/7 | |
| Waterfront | | affordable | |
| Backyard | | luxurious | |
| Cabin-ish in woods | | All-inclusive | |
| Outdoors space | | intimate | |
| fireplace | | | |

**Processing afterwards**

Release weekly journal prompts or a month of prompts after event
Keep the retreat going once home
E.g. Private facebook groups

# Appendix D–Milestone 4 Design Research Report

INTRODUCTION

PROTOTYPE SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

NPO Statement: I want to create [a] space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

PROTOTYPE A: **Sabbath Rest Kit (AKA Retreat In A Box)**

- Prototype Description: The plan for this prototype was to create a portable retreat option that removes travel-related expenses and reduces the overall costs of retreats.

- Research question

How do I create, and package, an at-home retreat experience with which women will want to engage and that they will find valuable?

- Assessment Benchmark(s)

My original benchmark centered around user engagement as measured by responses to a prepared survey as well as personal comments and suggestions.

- What was your important discovery?

My biggest discovery about this prototype was that it was simply not feasible. As I began researching the kinds of products already on the market, and as I researched the history and processes for starting subscription programs, as well as the psychosocial benefits, I quickly learned that there were multiple problems with attempting this project. First, subscription box services are very complicated businesses. They require a level of business acumen I simply do not have. In addition, they require a depth of psychological and marketing knowledge and expertise that would be well out of the scope of the Doctoral program, especially since neither is in my areas of expertise. The biggest discovery came from talking with people who had participated in the various workshops in which I have engaged throughout the first two years in the Doctor of Ministry degree program. Many women need to get away, even if only for short stretches of time, from their day-to-day routines to comfortably engage in Sabbath time practices. As important as the activities are, the sense of being in community with others on the journey cannot be replaced by a kit in a box. As a result, after consulting with my peer group and Faculty Mentor, I decided not to pursue this prototype. The idea will remain in my resource file as I move forward with the final project next year.

PROTOTYPE B: **Renting/purchasing a home or building to be used for short-duration retreats**

NPO Statement: I want to create [a] space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves.

- Prototype Description:

For this prototype, I hosted two retreats in my home. I am fortunate to live in a large home with plenty of gathering space; I was able to take full advantage of this resource which participants described as "quiet, good-smelling, comfortable, and welcoming." This, in addition to being heartening, is important for setting the stage for future endeavors.

- Research question

How can hosting short-term, intimate retreats in my home serve as an incubator for a longer-term goal of purchasing or renting a dedicated space?

The first retreat was held on Monday, March 7, 2022. Nine women accepted the invitation to participate. The age range was from early 20s (college junior) to mid-60s; most of the participants were in their mid-30s. There were two African American women, one biracial woman (Black/White), and six White women. Seven of the nine women were either current college students or college graduates; one holds a doctoral degree. This retreat was intentionally different from what most people anticipate for a 'Christian' retreat. The focal activity was a *salsa* and *bachata* lesson. The women gathered at 6:00 for a simple meal of tacos and sangria to coordinate with the dancing theme. After gathering and eating, I asked participants to complete an Emotions Survey (see appendix) which asked them to identify emotions they had experienced during the prior week as well as on the day of the retreat. A third column was left empty. After the surveys were completed, we adjourned to the lower level where my invited guest had set up for our dance lesson. For an hour we learned the basic steps to *salsa* and *bachata,* popular Latin dances. Everyone was fully engaged, and the room was filled with laughter. When the lesson ended, we returned to the main level where they were directed back to the Emotions Survey on which they were asked to reassess their emotions after having spent an hour dancing. This was followed by a discussion of the changes they noticed in their bodies and feelings. Everyone reported a noticeable upsweep in the feeling of emotional wellness. We discussed the benefits of dancing to overall health and as a Sabbath retreat activity. The discussion was rich. The evening ended with the women completing a short survey about potential retreat topics, times that might work best for future events, as well as barriers to attending retreats. (see Appendix)

The second retreat was held on Thursday, March 31, 2022, and was more traditional in nature. A smaller group of women accepted the invitation to participate. Six women agreed to attend and five did so. The sixth got lost on her way and returned home. This group was more

homogenous than the first retreat. All of the women were in their late-40s to mid-50s; one was African American and the others were White.
The focal activity for this retreat was based on the Japanese technique called *Kintsugi*. Before the retreat, I purchased interesting cups from a local thrift store and gathered the necessary supplies; I expected this activity to be time-intensive and needed to make sure we were able to move quickly from gathering and sharing a meal to the main activity. Since the group was small, I decided against using the lower level. Instead, I quickly transformed the breakfast room table into a craft space and uncovered the assembled supplies. Each woman was allowed to select the cup that most spoke to her in some way.

After I explained the purpose of Kintsugi and gave verbal and written instructions, each person placed her cup in a paper bag and broke it with a hammer. The goal was to reassemble the cup with glue and highlight the seams between the broken pieces with gold paint. I enjoyed watching the participants labor over their pieces and reminding them that the goal was not perfection. Nor was it about creating 'art.' As the women worked, there was a lot of talking. They asked each other about their work and families. They commented on their own work, laughed together when pieces fell apart, and genuinely seemed to have a good time. It was particularly interesting to watch one woman whose piece kept falling apart. I helped her with a bit of tape which seemed to ease her frustration. She was quite tenacious about completing the task and wanting it to be 'correct.' Had we had more time, I can imagine the depth of conversation that could have ensued about this.

When each person believed she was done, she was invited to journal about the experience. For this segment, they moved into the adjoining family room where I had a table covered with a pretty Asian tablecloth. On top, there was an essential oil diffuser and flowers. The room has lots of cozy seating, the fireplace was lit and the lighting was subdued. Instrumental praise music played in the background. For the last segment of the retreat, regathered to process the experience and share the revelations each person believed she gained from the activity. Because the group was small, each person had ample opportunity to speak her truth. It was a valuable experience and each woman had something physical to carry with them when they left. Again, I asked each person to complete a survey similar to the one I used for the first retreat (see Appendix).

- Assessment Benchmark(s)

For both retreats, the assessment was based on participant engagement as observed during the retreats as well as user feedback as measured by responses to survey instruments. The completed surveys are included in the Appendix.

The following are things learned during the prototyping.

- My goal for each retreat was ten women. I did not reach the goal for either even though I continually asked for participants on social media. Nine people attended the salsa retreat and five attended the Kintsugi retreat. I am not sure if the difference in the number of people who agreed to participate was related to the differences in the night, Monday versus

Thursday, or the fact that I announced that the first retreat would involve dancing salsa. In retrospect, I should have queried the women on what night of the week would be more appealing. There are two things I will need to test for future events: 1. Is it more difficult to get people to commit the closer it gets to the weekend; and 2. Should all retreats have a catchy, descriptive title in order to capture the imagination?

- I purposefully chose to offer two very different types of experiences. One retreat was specifically religious in nature. I made direct references to God multiple times throughout the evening as did retreatants. The other retreat was not overtly religious. The music we danced to would be considered secular. The focus for both retreats was personal reflection yet was approached quite differently. This is important as I go forward. Everything I do has a Christian foundation. However, my NPO is about meeting the needs of women. This includes all women, even those who do not know or accept God. I believe I can show the love of God in all settings.

- There needs to be a funding source for hosting retreats even when I am not paying rent or mortgage for a dedicated space. I should have asked questions about how much, or even if, women be willing or able to pay to participate. I did not. For the first retreat, I hired a professional to teach the dance lesson. I offered women an opportunity to make a donation while making it clear that it was not necessary to do so. Though several women made donations, I did not recover the full cost of hiring the dance instructor. For both retreats, I covered the costs of food and drink. The costs associated with the prototyping were expected but offering free retreats without having an underwriter is not a sustainable model. This is certainly an issue to explore further.

- Two hours on a weeknight seemed to be a good duration. For each retreat, I used a 30-60-30 (Gather-Activity-Reflection/close) timetable. The model is a good one, especially for a weeknight. However, to make the best use of the two hours, things need to flow seamlessly from one part to the other and the theme needs to be carried throughout the evening. Stressing that people arrive on time will be critical in order to keep things on track. Transitioning provides another opportunity for me to keep participants focused. I did not employ these techniques for either retreat but using a singing bowl or chimes to signal the change can be very effective and needs to be explored for future events.

- Providing a meal is important, especially since some people will be coming directly from work. Participants seemed appreciative of the food I offered though there were recommendations to offer gluten-free and/or vegan options.

- Creating a calendar of events far in advance will be critical. Marketing and keeping the information before the target audience will make it easier for women to plan their schedules in order to participate.

- For me to successfully host retreats in my home, several things are important. First, I need to prepare myself to “set the table” for the women I will host. That means I cannot expect to

host a retreat on a day I have classes or meetings. Second, I need to hire a student, assistant, or otherwise assemble a team to take care of logistical items unrelated to the actual retreat content. Preparing a meal, retreat materials, serving, cleaning, and caring for each woman is too much. Third, it is necessary to clear the space after the retreat has ended through prayer.

- Based on input, in order for women to participate in retreats, they are concerned with: location (close to home or work); duration (short blocks of time); having information well in advance and being reminded close to the event; costs; and comfort with other participants (ability to build community). Issues related to COVID were also raised. What came through loudly and clearly is that time and energy are premium and they want time spent to be meaningful.

- As alluded to above, my house proved to be a great place to test the potential of holding retreats in a home-like environment. Rather than renting or buying a space in the short term, prototyping affirmed that it is possible to host meaningful gatherings in my home. This allows me the time to raise funding as well as develop programming for a future facility. Interestingly, several years ago I hosted an event in my home for young women. I had honestly forgotten about it until early in March when I went to hear one of these women preach. After the service, someone came up to talk to me and, with tears in her eyes, told me how impactful that gathering had been for her. It had, as she reported to me, literally saved her life. She felt like an outcast, was using drugs and alcohol, and had given up. The night of that gathering she felt as if someone really listened to her. She felt the presence of God anew. She left a different person and wanted me to know for years. I believe her testimony was timely and what I needed as I continue to work through the best way to meet the NPO.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH ESSAY ON THE EMERGING SOLUTION

**Brief Introduction To e-commerce**

In today's world, consumers have access to any product or service at the tip of their fingers, in their pocket, tablet, computer, or smart television. A prevalent field, the e-commerce industry allows companies and individuals to market, buy, and sell nearly every conceivable service or product over the internet. It has changed the traditional brick-and-mortar business landscape significantly. As such, e-commerce is an innovation referred to as a 'disruptive technology.' (Tim Smith, Investopedia). To put it into perspective, online news, ride-sharing apps, and even the advent of electricity are all examples of disruptive technologies that replaced systems or habits because they had attributes that were unmistakably better than what came before. These disruptive, innovative, technologies continue to impact the ways people spend their money and time. An example of the ever-expanding E-commerce market is Subscription Box Retail Services (SBRS). In this business model, consumers pay a weekly, monthly, or quarterly fee to subscribe to services or merchandise

tailored to a particular niche. Beauty-related products or monthly wine clubs are but two examples of this saturated industry.

**Inside Subscription Box Retail Service**

Subscription Box Retail Services have multiple advantages. Chief among them is the potential for a steady revenue stream from committed consumers/subscribers. Since their inception, SBRS have seen steady growth, especially among young women living in rural areas who make up nearly 60% of all subscribers. Not surprisingly, subscribers tend to have high incomes. According to the Consumer Subscription Retail Services Report (2020) 54% of subscribers report incomes over $100,000. On the other hand, SBRS is a highly competitive market with over 7000 subscription box services globally. Consumers do not purchase memberships to a business, such as a gym or contract for long-term services such as cable or internet. Instead, they are not bound by traditional contractual agreements and may choose to opt out of services when it no longer meets their needs or desires. In addition to purchasing a product, consumers are also expecting a certain level of service. When they are displeased, they take their business elsewhere. As a result, there is a high rate of attrition or customer churn rate in SBRS, nearly 40%. This churn rate is even higher in the meal kit industry which some believe to be as high as 60-70%. (Chen et al 2018).

**Retreat-In-A-Box**

In 2020 when COVID-19 forced the world indoors, Wellness companies took advantage of the pandemic by offering products designed to replicate in-person events in a stay-cation atmosphere. These retreats-in-a-box included the types of activities one would expect: meditation, journaling, goal-setting, personal reflection, craft projects, snacking, and products designed for pampering oneself. Companies promised a product designed to "make you look good and feel wonderful;"[134] a "seasonal retreat experience, wrapped in a box & delivered to your door; so you can awaken the magic inside;"[135] or the all-encompassing, "stop learning, start knowing."[136] Like most do-it-yourself projects, these products work well for some people. For others, they become one more thing to forget, ignored, or put off until the elusive 'right time.' Even when the box is filled with the most engaging products, they still require the user to do the heavy lifting: setting aside time, creating the proper environment, tuning out the distractions of home and work, and focusing fully during the 'retreat.' Flora Tsapovsky, author of *A Mental Getaway Without Going Anywhere*, describes her experience. "I settled in one night earlier this month to complete a Numina retreat designed to help me understand my past and future, recognize harmful behavior patterns, and commit to personal

[134] https://retreatyourself.com/

[135] https://www.instagram.com/retreatyourself_box/?hl=en

[136] https://janphillips.com/shop/retreat-in-a-box/

and professional goals. Completing it wasn't exactly a walk in the park; staying focused, even with frequent breaks, was a struggle. The lasting effect—a sense of clarity and self-congratulatory optimism—took time to settle in."[137]

Retreats-in-a-box, although an excellent idea, will never be able to fully complete with, nor replicate, the experience of women gathering together, sharing their collective wisdom, and journeying towards wholeness with others on the same path. As a result, prototyping a Sabbath-Kit-In-A-Box was eliminated as a potential Most Valuable Prototype.

**Creating Space For Women**

The work done throughout this academic year, and through the prototyping experience, have reaffirmed that my identified NPO remains not only relevant but a passion. Over time, I have reworded the NPO statement to better reflect what may become the direction for the MVP. The current version is *"I want to create [a] space where women can (re)discover who God made them, pursue healing, be refreshed, and be empowered to grow into the fullest expression of themselves."* Though it may, at first, seem insignificant, I have bracketed the word [a]. There are multiple ways to create and hold space for healing, restoration, and empowerment. Physical settings such as churches, mosques, and parks come readily to mind. There are geographical locations such as Ireland and Scotland that are purported to be especially 'thin,' places where it is possible to walk between worlds not perceived by the five senses. Many find them to be especially rich for spiritual renewal. Another concept of sacred space refers to specific events such as spiritual retreats that are set aside in time and location. The latter is the focus of the research and prototype for this semester.

The concept of retreats is not novel; the practice predates Christianity. Though formal Christian retreats can be traced to St. Ignatius of Loyola, the work-rest, inhale-exhale cycle was firmly established by God in the Creation narrative and exemplified in Jesus' life and ministry. An itinerant preacher, Jesus moved from place to place, healing, teaching, and mentoring those with whom He traveled, and those He met along the way. Though His work was critical, Jesus intuitively understood the importance of separating periods of work by periods of time set aside for prayer, rest, and encounter with God. Interestingly, Jesus did not allow unhealed people or unmet needs to deter Him from taking the time needed for these retreats. At regular intervals, Jesus pulled away from the crowds and the tremendous pressure of people placing demands on His time. These periods of rest, renewal and communion were so important that Jesus once suspended all activity to take a 40-day Judean wilderness retreat. (Luke 4:1-2)

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[137] Flora Tsapovsky, A Mental Getaway Without Going Anywhere. October 29, 2021, https://www.elle.com/beauty/a38067416/a-mental-getaway-without-going-anywhere/

The work-rest cycle is largely corrupted in a world spinning ever faster; busyness has become a badge of honor. Though the reclamation of rest as a vital part of the ability to work is crucial for all, the NPO specifically targets the needs of God's daughters for whom rest is too often considered a luxury.

Women are busy – extremely busy - and there is a name for it. In 2005, Dr. Brent Bost, obstetrician-gynecologist, identified the disorder affecting American women in major proportions, the Hurried Woman Syndrome. According to Dr. Bost, the condition is directly related to stress and impacts over sixty million women between the ages of 25-55. While Dr. Bost admits that there are unavoidable stressors such as a stressful career, a sick relative or excessive responsibility, he maintains that much stress is avoidable and can be better managed. These are the result of normalizing busy, hectic schedules and cluttered lifestyles. Left unattended, Hurried Woman Syndrome can have long-term and far-reaching consequences for the women themselves and those in her care.[138] Mental Health America reports startling statistics about depression, one of the consequences Dr. Bost discusses as symptomatic of Hurried Women Syndrome.

- Approximately 12 million women in the United States experience clinical depression each year and about one in every eight women can expect to develop clinical depression during their lifetime;
- Social factors may also lead to higher rates of clinical depression among women, including stress from work, family responsibilities, the roles and expectations of women and increased rates of sexual abuse and poverty and
- Women experience depression at roughly twice the rate of men. [139]

For African American women, Hurried Woman Syndrome may be even more complicated. According to psychiatrist Reba Peoples,

> We live in a culture that values productivity, so we're measured by that capacity to produce," Peoples said. "But for Black people, that idea goes even deeper because our [enslaved] ancestors were literally valued based on their capacity to produce labor. Not working up to capacity could mean beatings, or you could be sold off and

[138] http://hurriedwoman.com/syndrome.html. For more details see Brent Bost's book, The Hurried Woman : Conquer Fatigue, Achieve Successful Lifelong Weight Management, and Rekindle the Fire in Your Relationships , Vantage Press, 2001. ISBN 0533136199, 222 pgs.

[139] Reported on https://www.mhanational.org/depression-women.

> separated from your family. So it was dangerous to rest, and we've had that encoded into our DNA.[140]

Ralinda Watts, in her essay, *For Black Women Rest Is An Act of Resistance and Radical Self-Love* expresses it this way. She writes, "Our ancestors have taught us to endure. By watching our grandmothers and mothers, we learned to just "keep on keeping on," despite the toll on one's physical and mental well-being."[141] As an African American woman, this demographic is particularly important.

Judith Duerk, in *A Circle of Stones: Woman's Journey To Herself,* explains the toll fatigue exacts on women's bodies and souls to the point where some women are actually relieved to contract a horrendous disease so they can, without guilt, get the rest they so desperately need.[142] Busyness is a harmful, burdensome lifestyle that leaves little room for the joys of life: meaningful conversation, healthy meals, play, hobbies, or peace. As life moves faster, women feel compelled to do more. Lives are not simply overloaded; they are lived in overdrive. Rarely in the moment, women tend to live ten minutes, two hours, even a week into the future.[143]

In 2021 two elite women athletes shocked the world of sports by taking themselves out of highly competitive and visible sporting events: Naomi Osaka withdrew from the French Open and Simone Biles withdrew from the Olympic Games in Tokyo. Both women cited, on world stages, mental health issues as the fundamental concern and withdrawal to rest and refocus as the best remedy. While there is a wealth of evidence connecting overwork with declining mental and physical health, as a whole, the world values and rewards productivity. Though many applauded Osaka and Biles for prioritizing their mental health, many expressed strong sentiments of disappointment in their decisions suggesting that performance was the most important goal. This pervasive value system impacts women at all socioeconomic levels in dishonoring and devaluing ways.

**What Is the Answer?**

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[140] Reported in https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2021/08/20/black-women-professionals-rest/

[141] https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/why-rest-is-act-resistance-for-black-women-48071653

[142] Mark-Stuart, Penelope. On Women and Sabbath Rest. The Living Pulpit. April-June 1998. http://library.mibckerala.org/lms_frame/eBook/pauline%20chro/sabth/sabbath%201.pdf

[143] Valorie Burton has written a wonderful book, How Did I Get So Busy: The 28-Day Plan To Free Your Time, Reclaim Your Schedule, and Reconnect with What Matters Most. New York: Broadway Books. 2007. Burton is clear that the book is not another time-management tool. Rather, it invites the reader to look deeply into what currently captures her time and efforts and directs her to make important value choices.

*"Your life is always talking to you — are you listening?"*

*(Unknown)*

As mentioned, the second prototype focused on offering short-duration retreats for small gatherings of women in a home-like environment. There is limited research targeting the impact of specific retreat activities though certain activities, such as meditation and yoga at retreats, allow for reflection and meaning-making which may lead to personal transformation (Boswijk et al., 2012).[144] The link between retreats and well-being or positive change is much more often highlighted. Research in environmental psychology, psychology, and geographical science has shown that a retreat-like setting can be restorative (Rutledge and Raymon, 2001) and therapeutic (Lea, 2008), inducing positive development for guests. The Myrna Brind Center of Integrative Medicine at Thomas Jefferson University published the findings of a preliminary study on the neurophysiological effects of spiritual retreats on participants. This study documents the perceived benefits of immersive, multi-day spiritual retreats, practices associated with strong emotional responses, reduced stress, enhanced well-being, spiritual transformation experiences, and even life-changing consequences. (Falkenstrom, 2010, Hood, 1977; Kennedy, Abott, & Rosenberg, 2002).[145]

In an ideal world, each person would live a life where work and rest are balanced. Unfortunately, we do not live in an ideal world. Until systems catch up, and people reaching and teaching women the importance of developing manageable habits of rest remains a priority. Certainly, most women do not have the platform or ability to prioritize their need for rest, restoration, and healing as do Osaka and Biles. As a result, addressing the NPO remains critical.

MVP (MOST VIABLE PROTOTYPE)

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[144] Strayhorn, T. (2021). Measuring the Effects of COVID-19 on Women's Daily Lives and Well-Being: A National Survey's Preliminary Results. Academia Letters, Article 4133.https://doi.org/10.20935/AL4133.

[145] Falkenström, F. (2010). Studying mindfulness in Experienced Mediators: A Quasi-Experimental Approach. *Personality and Individual Differences,* 48, 305-310; Hood Jr. R. W. (1977). Eliciting Mystical States of Consciousness With Semistructured Nature Experiences. *Journal of Scientific Study of Religion*, 16, 155-163.;Kennedy, J.E., Abbott, R.A., & Rosenberg, B.S. (2002). Changes in Spirituality and Well-being In a Retreat Program For Cardiac Patients. *Alternative Therapies In Health and Medicine*, 8, 64-73. Quoted in Newberg, Andrew B, Nancy A Wintering, David B (David Bryce) Yaden, Zhong Li, Brendan Bowen, Noah Averick, and Daniel A Monti. 2018. "Effect of a One-Week Spiritual Retreat on Dopamine and Serotonin Transporter Binding: A Preliminary Study." *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 8 (3): 265–78. doi:10.1080/2153599x.2016.1267035.

While visiting geographical locations and multi-day retreats are powerful, they remain luxuries for women who already feel over-worked and under-resourced financially, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. As a result, it is important to consider methods to create and hold space that invites women to come out from amongst the busyness. Throughout the past two years, *how* to do this has continued to morph. The original idea was to create a strategic plan for a retreat center, an extremely broad plan. The prototyping experience has been very meaningful in bringing clarity to an important point. While the NPO articulates a critical need for God's daughters, there is no way one person, or one project, can fulfill the mission. However, I *can* reach women, one, five, ten, or 20 at a time in ways that ignite a passion. These women can then reach others within their sphere of influence. This has exciting possibilities.

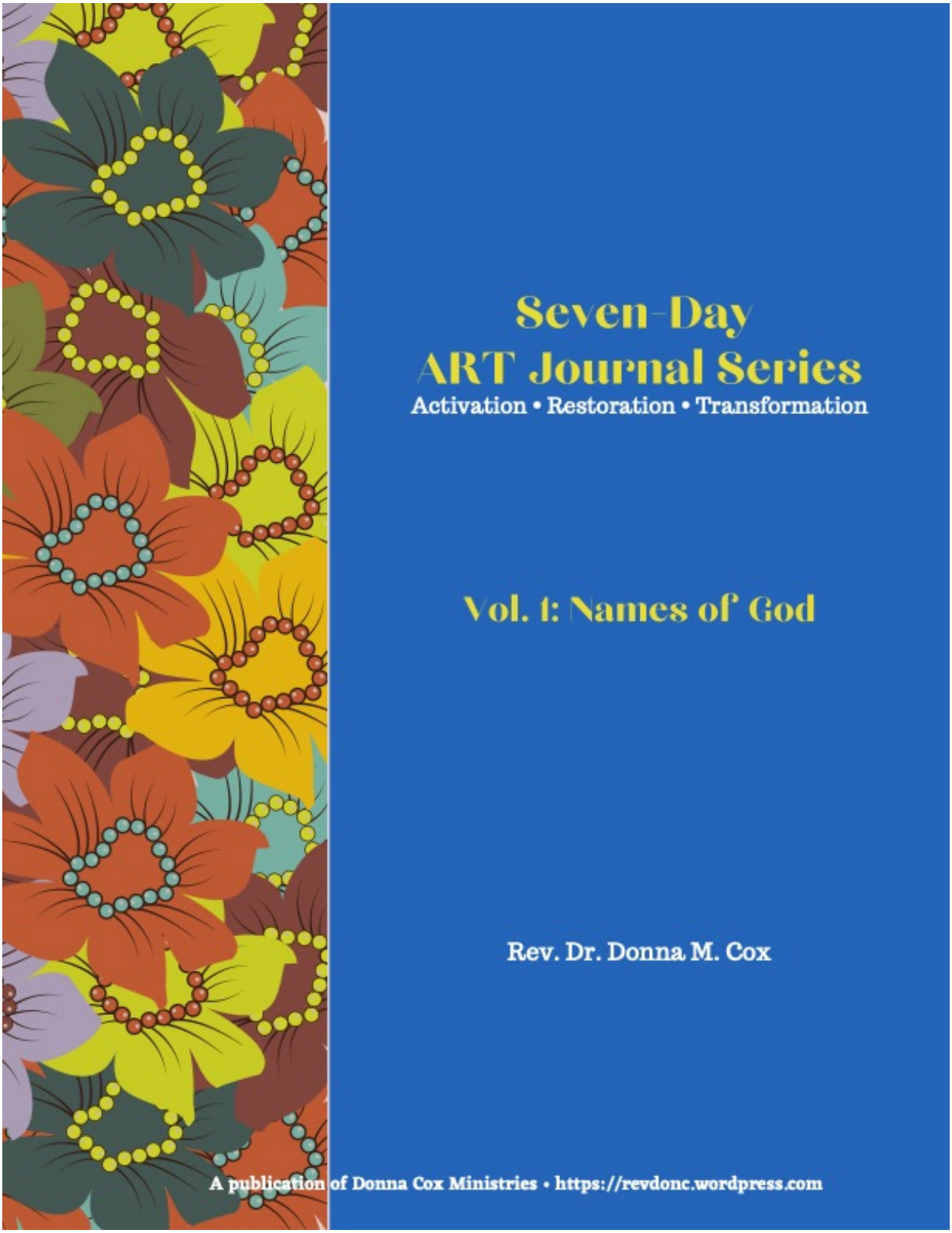
While I cannot, at this moment, say with 100% conviction what physical form the final project will take, I anticipate developing a project manifesto and collecting ideas, methodologies, and resources. Included in this project will be research I do while I am on sabbatical from the university where I teach this fall. That research is directly linked to the NPO and will be exploring the transformational and transformative power of music as space. Music and creative arts have the potential to be accessible, practical tools. During the sabbatical, I will explore the ways music and other creative arts hold 'sacred space' that invites people to enter. The manifesto, ideas, methodologies, and resources may ultimately take the form of a book or resource manual.

# Appendix E–Project Appendix Documentation

The Watering Place

WORSHIP • ACTIVATION • TRANSFORMATION • ENCOUNTER • RESTORATION

# WATERING SESSIONS JOURNALS


Seven-Day
ART Journal Series
Activation • Restoration • Transformation
Vol. 1: Names of God
Rev. Dr. Donna M. Cox
A publication of Donna Cox Ministries • https://revdonc.wordpress.com

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Summary:A prayer and reflection journal

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# Seven-Day ART Journal

Activation • Restoration • Transformation

DCM is pleased to offer Volume 1 in the Seven-Day ART Journal. Each volume offers four days of guided reflection around the Journal theme, days 1, 2, 4, 5. Day 3 is a Restoration activity, designed to encourage you to slow your pace, breathe and simply BE. Day 6 offers an Activation action, an activity designed to invite you deeper and to build your capacity to hear from God. Finally, Day 7 is the Transformation Action offering suggestions for taking what you discover during the week forward. At the end of the Seven-Day ART Journal, it is our prayer that your faith will be strengthened to action. Thank you for taking this journey with Donna Cox Ministries.

## Volume 1: Names of God

We live in a time when people seemingly give children names without much thought. As a public school teacher I taught children saddled with all kinds of names with even crazier spellings. Poor babies. We carefully chose names for our own children, ones that had meaning, both inherent in the definition of the names themselves, and to us. Names are important. Every time we attach a name to a person – either their given name, or words such as honey, hard-headed, sweet, ugly, brilliant, or stupid - we give power to that appellation.

In the Bible, names had particular significance. They often spoke of the person's character, position in the family, and even prophesied or heralded their future. As people or circumstances changed, names often changed as well. Abram became Abraham, the father of nations. Christian-persecuting Saul became the Apostle Paul. Deceitful Jacob became Israel, the one who prevails. Simon Bar Jonah, the fisherman disciple became Peter, the rock on which Christ would build the church.

Throughout scripture, God continually revealed more of God's character, authority, and power through the use of names. As we study these names the more we learn more about who God truly is. We learn more about God's willingness and capacity as healer, provider, peace, omniscience, and more. We learn to dig into just what we need, when it is most needed. In the next seven days, you will study and reflect upon four of these names: Jehovah, Jehovah Shalom, Jehovah Jireh, and Jehovah Rapha. We hope these reflections will lead you to dig deeper and build your faith in God.

**A publication of Donna Cox Ministries**
**https://revdonc.wordpress.com**

# Jehovah • YAHWEH

God is dependable, faithful, & deserving of total trust & reverence.

The Fear Of The Lord
Tommy Walker

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of
wisdom, life, hope, and joy
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
So let us worship; let us bow down
Let us fear our God
To Him belongs eternal praise
Glorious and righteous
Are His works, His ways
To Him belongs all reverent praise
Faithful and just are His works, His ways
With our whole hearts, we will thank You
We will praise You, oh God, In the congregation,
with Your people we remember Your works

Listen to it here:
https://youtu.be/RZ5SnupM8Ws

## Reflect

**In what area of your life do you need to have a burning bush encounter with the Great I AM?**

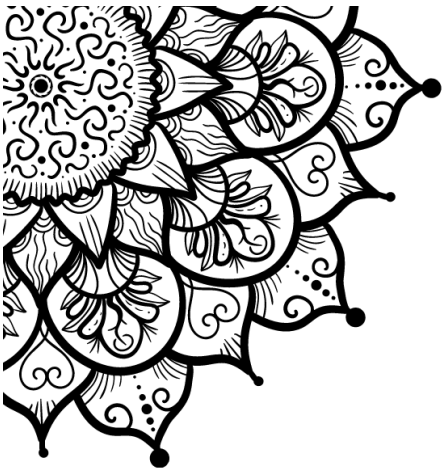
Exodus 3 is the story of an ordinary man having an encounter with the extraordinary, one that would totally change his life. On this ordinary day, Moses was doing what he did, tending his father-in-law's sheep on the back side of the desert. Everything seemed normal – until it wasn't. When Moses came to Horeb, he saw something he had never seen. Before him was a bush with a huge flame of fire in the middle. But this was no ordinary bushfire. Despite the flame, the bush remained whole and unburned. This intrigued Moses enough to make him step closer to figure out what was happening.

And from the center of the bush someone called his name. This was Moses' introduction to Yahweh, Jehovah, God of all, the Great I Am. Moses' interaction with Yahweh has lessons for us today.

First, God was in the center of the burning bush. It might seem as if everything around you is on fire and that flames are mere moments from fully engulfing you. Be assured that, if there is a fire, God is in it. God is in the middle of unemployment, depression, anxiety, pandemics, infidelity; you name it, God is there. And because God is, you are never alone.

Second, God knows your name. From the middle of a fully engulfed bush, God called Moses, by name. The meeting was neither accidental nor coincidental. No matter what you are going through right now, God is in the middle of it and God knows you by name. Luke 12:7 says even the hairs on your head are numbered by God! If God keeps count of the numbers of hair on your head, you can be certain that more important things are on God's radar.

Third, God told Moses He had seen the oppression of God's people, had heard their cries, was aware of their suffering, and was coming to their rescue. What makes this even more amazing is that those declarations are still true. God sees you right where you are. God hears the cries no one else knows you shed. God is aware of everything happening in your life and God promises to come to your rescue. God's very name means eternal. God cannot change. As Tye Tribbett says, "if He did it before He can do it again."



God Is A Healer
Kirk Carr

Sometimes life will hurt you
But remember God heals. God is a healer
Sometimes weapons form against you
But they'll never prosper.
Remember God is your shield
He is waiting for your call
Waiting to shield you from your fall
There's a place of rest and peace in the sanctuary
He sits waiting in the sanctuary. Yes!

Sometimes your bills can stress you
But remember God's peace. He's a peace giver
Sometimes your money's running low
and you're worried how you'll make it
but God will supply your need
He is waiting for your call
Waiting to shield you from your fall
There's a place of rest and peace in the sanctuary

I feel You moving in the sanctuary. Yes!
I feel a break-through in the sanctuary. Yes!
Move, right now, move, in the sanctuary
I believe there's a miracle in the sanctuary
And it's waiting for me
God is a healer!

Listen to it here:
https://youtu.be/Z82qjwXTP-o

# Jehovah Rapha

God heals – physically, emotionally, spiritually, financially, relationally.
There is nothing that concerns us which God is unable to heal!

I often find myself identifying with the Israelites and having to (re)learn the same lessons as they. After generations of oppression and cruel abuse, God sent Moses to their rescue. And what a dramatic rescue it was. In their flight to freedom they found themselves between a rock and a hard place, Pharaoh and his army at their backs and the Red Sea in front! God miraculously parted the sea and they traveled – on dry land – through curtains of water. Get this. God took them safely through what drowned their pursuers. Delivered. Free. Safe. They even partied on the other side. Yet, three days later they found themselves in the Desert of Shur, thirsty and whining. The miracle of being delivered from too much water paled in comparison to the new reality of none to drink.

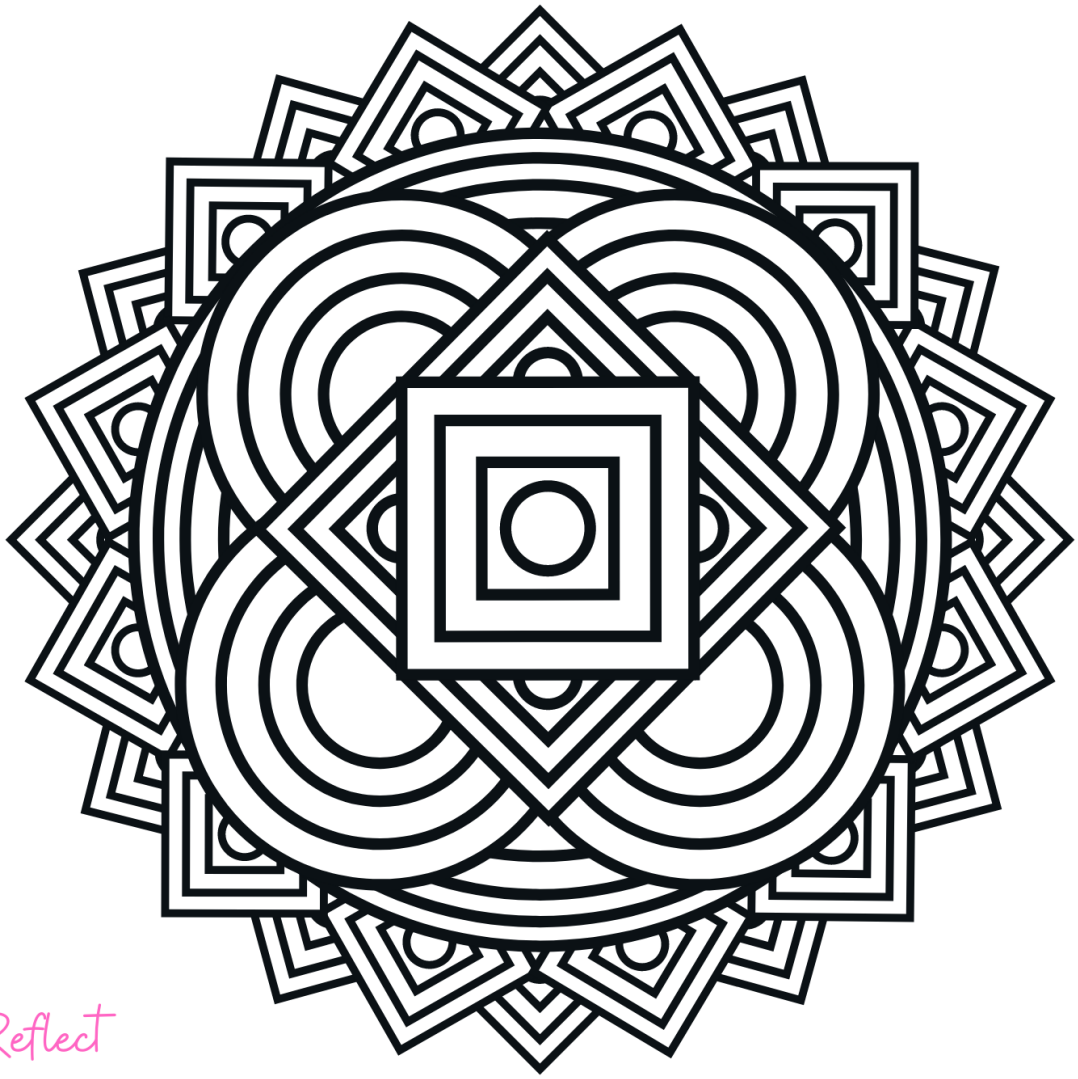
As they approached an oasis things began to look up, that is until they tasted the water. Bitter! One day too much water; one day no water; one day bitter water. This does not sound like fun and, like the Israelites, I just may have been complaining as well. In the face of this new need they forgot how God had just delivered them and complained. Moses did what a good leader does; he took it to God. He took the wood God showed him, tossed it in, and instantly the water was transformed from bitter to sweet and good to drink.

It was at this time, not when the Israelites were on their best behavior or in the proper posture of gratitude, but when they were acting like ungrateful, whiny children that God chose to reveal a significant aspect of God's nature. In the midst of what would unfortunately be a 40-year cycle of worship and whining, triumph and tantrum, God established a standard and stated, "I am Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals." God used the bitter waters of Marah as an object lesson. With one answer, with one touch, bitter became sweet. Jehovah Rapha healed. Just as God changed bitter to sweet for the Israelites, God wants to do the same for us. Heartbroken, disillusioned, depressed, worried, anxious, depressed, everything that is broken in our lives is a candidate for renewal at the touch of Jehovah Rapha.

Reflect **How can knowing God as Jehovah Rapha impact the way you approach God?**

# Restoration Activity

Coloring is a powerful spiritual discipline. As you color today, just allow Jehovah to minister to you. You might add words or other images to the design that come to mind as you color.



Reflect

# Jehovah Shalom

The God of Peace. When we rest fully in God, we obtain peace that surpasses all understanding. God's peace sustains us even when everything around us seems to be spinning out of control. We experience that peace in the person of Jesus.

God of Peace
Nikki Moltz

I've gotten used to the voice inside my head
Bending the truth and twisting every word
You said I find serenity in your Spirit,
there's nothing I want more
than just to meditate on your promise
That You're the God of Peace
Be still. Quiet all my fears
Draw near. Silence all the noise
Speak clear, I want to hear your voice
I've gotten used to the weight upon my chest
It felt like a fight to take in another breath
So let my mind be governed by your
Spirit, there's nothing I want more than to just
to meditate on your promise that
You're the God of Peace
Draw near to me
My mind is not a playground
where fear can come and go
My mind belongs to heaven
And it tells me where to run
You're not the God of disorder
You're the God of Peace
You're transcending understanding
And renewing how I think I know that
You're the God of Peace
Your covenant is peace for me
A promise you will always keep
For all eternity I'll be with the Prince of Peace
You're the Prince of Peace
I'm breathing in your peace.
You're silencing every fear

Listen to it here:
https://youtu.be/LtSVacZEioA

The Israelites were going through hell, pure and simple. The Midianites were running roughshod over the Israelites, burning their crops and killing their cattle. As a result, the Israelites hid in caves and made dens in the mountains, anything to try to keep themselves safe. To say this was a period of unrest would be a tremendous understatement. In the middle of constant fear and devastation, God had a little talk with Gideon who, himself, was hiding from the Midianites, beating out wheat in a winepress. Gideon was from the weakest clan in Manasseh and he was the youngest in his family, not what you'd expect from God's chosen. But chosen, he was. God seems to make a habit of choosing the weak to confound the wise (I Cor. 1:27). Gideon was naturally wary of being told he was to go in his might and save Israel. But God saw something in Gideon he didn't see in himself. God looked beyond Gideon's station in life and even Gideon's anxiety and doubt about his capability. The Lord said to Gideon, "Peace be to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." At this revelation, Gideon built an altar to the Lord at Ophrah and called it, The Lord Is Peace.

There is no doubt we live in a time of total unrest. Hatred, fear, and discontentment are at an all time high. People all over the world are sick and dying from COVID-19 and it seems as if the world will never be settled. Yet, in the midst of all of this, even when we feel least able to make a difference for others because of our own physical, financial, or emotional deficits, God is calling. Jesus reminds us to be of good cheer because we have His peace. Jesus, himself, IS our peace. As a result, we can, like the apostle Paul, be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, lay our requests before God and EXPECT the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, to guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil.4:6-7)

Reflect

**As you think about what is going on in your life today, what do you need to surrender to the Prince of Peace?**

# Jehovah Jireh

God provides! There is nothing we need, beginning with salvation, an eternal provision, that God cannot and will not provide.

Jehovah Jireh
Paul Wilbur

Jehovah Jireh, my provider
His grace is sufficient for me
My God shall supply all my needs
According to His riches in glory.
He will give His angels charge over me
Jehovah Jireh cares for me.

Listen to it here:
https://youtu.be/yy2FFM9Kjqw

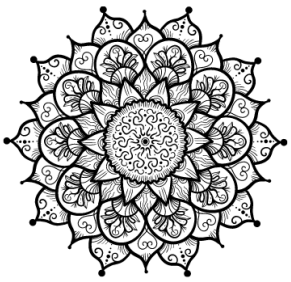
## Reflect

Think about a situation in which you feel hopeless or helpless. Ask God to open the eyes of your heart so you can see the ram in the bush. Make note of any ways you see God's provision even if it is just a mere glimpse. Make a decision that you will magnify the provision instead of the problem.

Abraham and Sara had waited many years before the promised child, Isaac, was born. All seemed right with their world until God gave Abraham an unexpected and painful directive: Take Isaac, your only son, to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering. Excuse me, Lord, am I missing something? Well, that would have been my response. Yet, Abraham obeyed without question. Taking the teenager and servants, they set out for Moriah. When they got near, Abraham instructed the servants to wait while he and the boy traveled on to worship. They would, Abraham declared, return when they were done. This declaration makes me wonder if Abraham was lying to the servants, engaging in wishful thinking, or if this was a prophetic utterance. Abraham, alone, knew what God required of him, the sacrifice of his only son. I can only imagine the depth of his pain. As they neared the place for the sacrifice, Isaac asked an important question. "Father, I see the wood and the fire but , um, where is the sheep?" Isaac knew that in order for worship to be real, a sacrifice was required. Abraham responded, "Yahweh will provide." Abraham bound Isaac and laid him on the stack of wood. With knife in hand arced towards his boy, God stopped him. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice that which was most important to him was enough. In that moment, Abraham saw the ram tangled in the brush. He unbound Isaac, they captured the ram, and offered it as a burnt offering. Abraham called that place The-Lord-Will-Provide.

Sometimes, it seems like the thing God promised will never come to pass. No matter how much effort we exert, the goal seems impossible. Sometimes it seems as if the very thing we've prayed for will be taken away. Success seems like a wisp that's difficult to grasp. Sometimes it feels like we are tied up, laying on a pile of wood while other folk gleefully stoke the fire. There are times when, like Isaac, we say, "Um God, I see the wood and the fire but where is the lamb." These are the times we must remember God is Jehovah Jireh, the God who provides. In the story of Abraham and Isaac we glimpse a shadow of God's ultimate provision. God provided a ram in the bush for Abraham but God provided Jesus for you and me. Jesus was the spotless lamb, a once-and-for-all sacrifice so we could live. And like Isaac, we can walk away from that which should have been our death, that which should have taken us out or pulled us under for the last count. God is Jehovah Jireh, present tense. God is still in the providing business. We can look at the situation or we can look for the provision. It's our choice.

# Activation Action



Today you will do an activation activity designed to get the river of faith flowing.

- Find a place where you can sit comfortably and quietly for a while.
- Select your favorite quiet praise song or meditation music.
- Sit in stillness listening to the music. Imagine God sitting next to you. Welcome God into this time of intimacy and activation. Ask God to speak and open your heart to hear. Begin to write whatever flows from your mind and heart. Do not correct grammar, spelling or censor what you write. Just keep the pen moving on the paper. Do not stop to read what you are writing or worry about whether it makes sense. Give yourself totally over to spontaneous flow of words and images. Know that God wants to be with you and wants to speak to you.
- Press through feelings of anxiousness and silence the voice of the doubter or critic. Keep writing until nothing else comes.
- Turn the paper over for a few minutes and just breathe for a few minutes.
- Thank God for loving you and being with you during this activation.
- Turn the page over and slowly read what you wrote. See what God has spoken. Circle or highlight key phrases. You will likely be surprised!

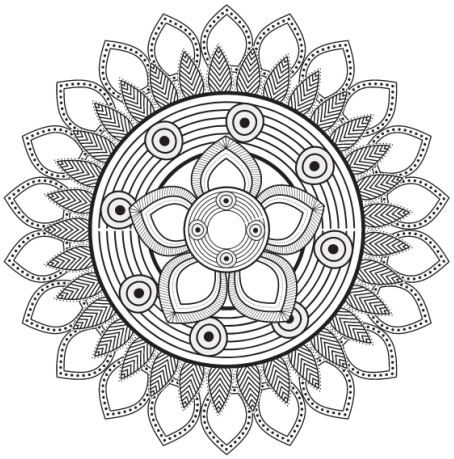
Listen & Write

# Transformation Action

In the Seven-Day ART Journal, you have focused on four names that express important aspects of God's character. Today is a day to meditate on one or all of them. Select one of the suggested activities below or create your own.

- Choose one of the names of God that seems especially appropriate to you in this season. Revisit what you wrote.
- Play the song that accompanied the reflection. Sing along. Dance.
- Explore Youtube for other songs that talk about God as Healer, Provider, Peace, or Eternal. Create a playlist for next week.
- Throughout the day, look for evidences of God as Healer, Provider, Peace, or Eternal in unusual places. Write them in your journal or post them on the refrigerator.
- Read the back stories for each of the names of God you studied this week. Expect revelation.
- Invite your family to do one of the activities you did during the week. Discuss your reflections over dinner or before bed.

Reflect



Seven-Day ART Journal: Activation, Restoration & Transformation, The Names of God is the first volume in a series of week-long journals. Drawing inspiration from contemporary song lyrics and Holy Scripture, each volume offers guided reflection around the Journal theme and Activation, Restoration, and Transformation Activities designed to build faith. Each volume combines , prayer, original art work, coloring, doodling and writing prompts in an easy-to-use format.

A publication of Donna Cox Ministries
https://revdonc.wordpress.com

# Seven-Day ART Journal

ACTIVATION • RESTORATION • TRANSFORMATION

## Reflections on Psalm 126: From Timeout To Liberty

All prints of artwork,
including the cover,
are original acrylic and
watercolor paintings
by Donna M. Cox

# Reflections on Psalm 126: From Timeout To Liberty

**Seven-Day ART Journal**
**Activation • Restoration • Transformation**

This journal invites you into Psalm 126 as you reflect on what it means to live in timeout and the beauty of life on the other side. Each day offers a short introduction, a scripture passage, selected lyrics to contemporary songs to aid in your reflection process, and a journal prompt. In addition to the seven-day experience, there are three action pages, Activation, Restoration, and Transformation. These have been placed in the journal in sequence but it is entirely up to you when they are done. You might use these activities to extend the journal from seven to ten days. You may choose to do a daily reflection in the morning and one of the activities in the evening. It is up to you. You have the liberty to decide.

Each page of the journal provides space for journaling, doodling, or coloring. Throughout, there are prints of original art. These are provided as additional prompts for reflection.

Enjoy the journey and expect God to meet you.
Donna Cox

## From Timeout To Liberty

Psalm 126: 1-6

*When the* LORD *brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The* LORD *has done great things for them." The* LORD *has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. Restore our fortunes,* O LORD, *like streams in the* Negev. *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.* (NIV)

# Day One

My younger sister seemed to spend the better part of her childhood in timeout. When she was older, timeouts became periods of being grounded. She just couldn't seem to walk the straight and narrow for any length of time. She constantly shifted gears. For a period of time, she would be sweet and docile, readily – and pleasantly – obeying Mother. Then she'd be defiant, bent on having her way. One year she was on punishment from before Thanksgiving to nearly Valentine's Day. As soon as she was about to be released from one punishment, she'd do something that landed her back in timeout. The problem wasn't that she was a bad child. She just wanted things the way she wanted them when she wanted them at times. And she wasn't always willing to submit to parental authority. She ignored the standards for behavior that ruled our house. She often forgot to be grateful. And sometimes she was outright defiant. During these times, Mother had to help her adjust her attitude.

This is how it was with the Israelites. They repeatedly engaged in behaviors that separated them from God. No matter how often God rescued them, provided for them, forgave them, they were constantly seduced back to the dark side. Like little children, they demanded that their desires be satisfied never realizing that they were looking for fulfillment in all the wrong places. They gave no thought to the consequences of their attitudes and actions. As a result of their disobedience, God put them in a 70-year timeout in Babylon! They were captured by the Babylonians and deported. That's a very long time! But because God is loving as well as just, He didn't send them into exile without a promise.

> Jeremiah 29:11-14 *For I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. In those days when you pray, I will listen. If you look for me in earnest, you will find me when you seek me. I will be found by you," says the LORD. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes. I will gather you out of the nations where I sent you and bring you home again to your own land."*

The bad news? They were going to be in timeout for a very long time. The better news? I**t would not be permanent!**

## Read:

2 Samuel 14:14 God does not sweep life away; instead He devises ways to bring us back when we have been separated from Him. (NLT)

## Listen:

I Didn't Know My Own Strength
Whitney Houston

Lost touch with my soul
I had nowhere to turn
I had nowhere to go
Lost sight of my dream
Thought it would be the end of me
I thought I'd never make it through
I had no hope to hold on to
I thought I would break
I didn't know my own strength
And I crashed down and I tumbled
But I did not crumble
I got through all the pain
I didn't know my own strength
Survived my darkest hour
My faith kept me alive
I picked myself back up
Held my head up high
I was not built to break
I didn't know my own strength
Found hope in my heart
I found the light to light
My way out of the dark
Found all that I need
Here inside of me
https://youtu.be/J0e6REO1yxY

*Come Out of Hiding*

## Reflect:

When we look at the state of our world, it is easy to feel as if we have all been sent to Babylon for a long timeout. From the COVID-19 pandemic that shut the world down to reemerging to violence, worsening social justice, war, increasing gaps between the wealthy and poor, human trafficking, and political unrest, it can be difficult to think things will ever change for the better. How could reclaiming the promises of Jeremiah 29:11 and 2 Samuel 14:14 help you process current issues?

## Day Two

When I was raising my children, personal computers, phones, and gaming systems were just finding their footing amongst American families. Our dumb televisions, stereo systems, even the telephone, were relegated to common areas of the home. Children did not have cell phones or private music stashes. As a result, timeout meant being exiled in rooms where laying on the bed thinking about the erst-while behavior or sleeping were just about the only options. Yesterday you reflected on the state of the world. Perhaps, as you reflected, your mind was drawn to personal situations. Few of us will ever have to worry about being taken captive by another nation and forced to live in foreign and hostile surroundings. However, in life, we will experience timeouts! Even with all of our modern conveniences and resources, if we are not intentional, we may just find ourselves living as captives.

Look at these definitions of a captive:

- a person or animal that is forcibly confined or restrained, especially someone held prisoner;
- somebody who is enslaved by a strong emotion such as love or anger
- irresistibly attracted to somebody or something;
- forced by circumstances to buy, accept or pay attention to something usually because there is no other option or no means of escape.

Almost everyone can identify with at least one of those definitions, in some way. Have you ever felt like a prisoner because someone else controlled the reins of your life? Have you ever felt so deeply about another person that emotion instead of good sense ruled your actions? Maybe you have gotten so angry or been so hurt by something someone did to you that you couldn't seem to control your responses. If so, you've been a captive. Perhaps your child is out of control and you spend every waking moment worrying about him. You're in captivity. Maybe you are constantly in financial straits; your money is so funny that, if you didn't have caller ID, you wouldn't ever answer the phone. That's bondage, my friend! Maybe you've chosen a path that you know leads to destruction and aren't sure how you can ever make a U-turn. That's captivity!

Whatever the situation, whatever the bondage, God can and does release the captives. Jesus came to bind up the hearts of the wounded, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. (Isaiah 61:1) Because we have access to the Word of God, because we have the power of Christ living within us, we don't have to live in captivity! We don’t have to have a permanent timeout.

## Read:

Galatians 5:1 Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you. (MSG)

## Listen:

Every Captive Free
Matt Gilman

For the spirit of the Lord God is upon me He has anointed me to preach good news Take away all of the sorrow and your mourning, to give the oil of joy and the garment of praise. For I have seen you in your captivity and I will open up every prison door. So arise, and shine for your light is coming and My glory is rising upon you. And I am dancing over you and I am singing over you songs of deliverance and I will set every captive free. And you will be with me for you are mine. And I will carry the weight of all your iniquities. I've carried the burden of all of your shame and I've called you by name and you are mine

https://youtu.be/gYyYgjvrvQQ

## Reflect:

In what areas of your life have you felt like a captive? How can knowing Jesus came to proclaim your freedom give you the courage to declare freedom in those areas? What steps do you need to take to align yourself with this truth?

*Coming After Me*

# Day Three

2005 was one of the worst years of my adult life. In many ways, it was a long walk through the valley of the shadow of death. It was during this dark time that God led me to Psalm 126. These six verses were a light drawing me out of the darkness of despair. One day as I was reflecting on this scripture, I walked through the yard, surveying my attempts at growing flowers and vegetables. I don't have a green thumb but I give it a good try. Anyway, I was walking through the yard, feeling sorry for myself. I was desperately trying to find a sense of peace when I encountered a miracle. I paused by the garage and, for the first time, I really saw a cucumber plant growing there. You know how it is. You can look at something over and over again but not actually see it. On this day, I saw something amazing, not just with my eyes, but with my spirit.

Weeks earlier I had planted a healthy cucumber plant but, for a reason unknown to me, it began to wither and die. Finally, there were no leaves or stalks. Nothing remained of the plant. I never plucked out the root. I figured it would just fertilize the soil. Somehow, without my input or knowledge, this plant I had given up for dead was suddenly standing over six feet tall! And it had several cucumbers on it. These weren't regular cucumbers either. Each one was over a foot long! That alone was a miracle since I hadn't given it any fertilizer. I hadn't even watered it. But there was more. I did not expect these big ole cucumbers to taste good. But they were delicious. This plant had neither been watered nor fed. Yet it rose out of the prison of untended soil to nudge me towards freedom. A simple cucumber plant reminded me that, though I was imprisoned by pain, despair, and worry over my future, I didn't have to stay that way. I could be free.

That's amazing news. However, and this is a big however, freedom ain't free. It will cost you something. God will open the door but God will not drag you out. Most of the time, if we are truly honest, we live in a self-imposed timeout. And we blame everyone but ourselves. But, it's rarely the situation that holds us prisoner! It's much more often the way we choose to handle the situation that does it. And if sidelining ourselves weren't bad enough, we begin to make ourselves comfortable in timeout. We decorate our little area of the world and tell ourselves this is the best it's ever going to be. Sometimes we're afraid of freedom. Freedom requires responsibility. In some ways, captivity is easier to deal with. It's the demon we know. There is something comforting about our areas of dysfunction. But life behind emotional, physical, spiritual, or financial bars is no life at all. What a shame to be sitting inside a prison when the door has already been unlocked! Release is available to you. Jesus signed your pardon with the shedding of His blood!

Accept the pardon and walk into your freedom.

## Read:

2 Corinthians 3:17 For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (NLT)

## Listen:

Rise
Katy Perry

I won't just survive
Oh, you will see me thrive
Can't write my story
I'm beyond the archetype
I won't just conform
No matter how you shake my core
'Cause my roots, they run deep
Oh ye of so little faith
Don't doubt it, don't doubt it
Victory is in my veins
I know it, I know it
And I will not negotiate
I'll fight it, I'll fight it
I will transform
When the fire's at my feet again
And the vultures all start circling
They're whispering, you're out of time
But still I rise
This is no mistake, no accident
When you think the final nail is in,
think again
Don't be surprised, I will still rise

*Just Resting*

## Reflect:

Think about something or someone in your life that you know is holding you back from being the best version of yourself. Be very honest with yourself. What do you gain by staying attached? What would be different if you simply let go?

## Day Four

We are likely to always remember, with clarity, when COVID-19 shut the world down. The suddenness and uncertainty had such a profound impact that it will be years before we fully understand and recover. I was teaching on that Tuesday night. I had already been given a heads-up that the University would begin spring break earlier and extend it for an additional week, an action that would mean no spring concert for my ensemble. The word became official in the middle of class. I dismissed, expecting to see my students in person two weeks later. None of us expected that two weeks to become two years of captivity to the Coronavirus. The class of 2020 missed all of the rites and rituals that mark the completion of their studies. When they went home, they didn't even have their stuff which remained on campus for months before they could return in shifts to retrieve it. The campus became a ghost town as faculty, staff, and students began the arduous task of retooling to deliver educational services. Two years after the class of 2020 left campus for an extended spring break, we welcomed them back to celebrate their accomplishments. The atmosphere was thick with a very different kind of energy. We laughed and cried tears of joy. The stories of how each had emerged from the shutdown were amazing.

In a similar manner, the Israelites had gone into captivity with heads hanging down, shoulders bowed and singing the blues. But that's not how they came out! Being shut down in Babylon had been devastating. They had lost their national identity and security as well as their freedom. But, on their march back to Jerusalem, they are a different group of folk. They are a people reclaiming everything they had lost, including their ability to dream.

Nothing kills dreams faster than captivity. When you are exiled, either because of your own sinfulness or because of situations you've let get the best of you, it is difficult to keep dreams alive. Prisons are oppressive places, no matter how you dress them up. When you are held captive, your humanity is destroyed, bit-by-bit. Without realizing it, dreams give way to nothingness. Ah, but when you walk out of the bondage and into fellowship with God, everything changes. People who are free, dream! Free folk have hope for a positive future. Life looks better when you're not viewing it through the bars of self-doubt, oppression, repression, and depression. Life takes on more clarity when it is not viewed through the prism of fear, anxiety, lust, poverty, self-hatred, or anger. You see yourself doing better. You imagine yourself with a new job, a stronger marriage, and children living for Christ. When you walk out of the prison of your mind you envision a community without boarded-up buildings and stores catering to the baser side of nature. You smell the sweet aroma of peace and wholeness. And what you can dream can become a physical reality!!

Timeout is over and you're free to go play! Dream big. Dream in technicolor. Dream in full expectation that your dreams can, and will, come true!

## Read:

Habakkuk 2:2-3 Write the vision and engrave it plainly on [clay] tablets so that the one who reads it will run. For the vision is yet for the appointed [future] time. It hurries toward the goal [of fulfillment]; it will not fail. Even though it delays, wait [patiently] for it, because it will certainly come; it will not delay. (AMP)

## Listen:

Write The Vision
Patrick Love

Write the vision, make it plain;
That they may run and not faint.
Though the vision is only for a while,
It shall speak and not lie.
For if the Lord said it,
You can count on it;
He will do just what He said.
It is so. Yes, it is so.
He will do just what He said.

*Celebration*

## Reflect:

Think of a dream you've been hesitant to grab hold or lean into. What keeps you from releasing the dream into the atmosphere? Write the dream. Give it as many details as possible. Create a dream board. Place it where you can see it often. Add to it as often as you need to before you take the next step and make a plan for how you will pursue the dream.

## Day Five

When I was minister of music at a local church, there was a woman in the choir who had the worst attitude I had ever seen. She consistently came to rehearsals late or missed altogether. She had a rapier tongue and didn't mind using it. Frankly, I was a bit afraid of her so, when she stopped coming to rehearsals, I was relieved. To my chagrin, I did not notice when she stopped attending church. One Sunday morning, I glimpsed her sitting in the back during the service. After church, she came towards me with her arms outstretched. I was wary, half expecting her to spew angry words. But, when I looked into her face, I saw a new person. She had a glow, a softness about the eyes and mouth I had never seen before. I found out later that she had been held captive to a very difficult home situation. Once released, her entire demeanor changed. Today I know her as a loving, beautiful woman.

Like my choir member, when the newly-released Israelites made their way back to Jerusalem, everybody they encountered could see a discernible difference. Not only were they reclaiming their ability to dream, they had a new pep in their step. Their heads were lifted high. They had smiles on their faces. They stood taller and walked lighter. Gales of laughter and songs of joy permeated the air. It was Carnival time in the middle east.

This kind of transformation is possible for you. When you are free, things change. It doesn't matter what you've done or what anyone has done to you. It doesn't matter if people count you out like I did my cucumber plant. Jesus was born, lived, and died so you can have an abundant, joyful, free life. Grab hold of that truth and make it your own. When people see your before-and-after shots, even the haters will marvel at the changes they see. Rather than singing the poor-me-blues, your heart will be filled with gratitude and your mouth will overflow with songs of praise.

## Read:

Psalm 30:11-12 You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing. You have taken away my clothes of mourning and clothed me with joy, that I might sing praises to you and not be silent.O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever! (NLT)

## Listen:

Happy
Pharrell Williams

It might seem crazy what I am 'bout to say. Sunshine, she's here, you can take a break. I'm a hot air balloon that could go to space with the air, like I don't care, baby by the way because I'm happy. Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof. Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth. Clap along if you know what happiness is to you. Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do. Here come bad news talking this and that. Well give me all you got, don't hold back. I should probably warn you I'll be just fine. No offense to you don't waste your time. Here's why. Can't nothing bring me down; my level's too high to bring me down because I'm happy

*Dancing Day*

## Reflect:

When is the last time you just danced with total abandonment? If it has been longer than a few days, stop what you are doing *right now*. Open up Youtube and play Pharrell's Happy. Get up and dance. It doesn't matter if you think you can't dance. Jump. Skip. Hop. Just move! It's not about dancing, anyway. It's about feeling free. God will meet you while you let the rhythm run through your body. When the song is over, do it again.

Now, grab a pen and write down how you feel. Is there a part of your body or mind where you now feel more of a sense of release than before you started? Do you feel more alive now? How will you gift yourself this experience in the future?

## Day Six

Several years ago, our church introduced Kris Vallotton's teaching on the pauper's mindset and we were encouraged to take the Prince and Pauper quiz. I had a rough childhood so I knew I probably used to have a pauper's mentality. Yet, I was convinced I had already outgrown it; I would "ace" the quiz. Not! I was shocked to find that, despite my life being drastically different than it had been, I still had a poverty mentality. Paupers act as if resources are limited and often fear not having enough. They get their identity from what their belongings or the positions they hold. Paupers have a difficult time seeing God as a 'good good father' who lavishes His children with great gifts. This revelation required me to (re)claim my inheritance as a child of God and joint-heir with Christ.

Coming out of timeout required the Israelites to make a shift in their thought processes. It is impossible to be a prisoner for seventy years and not be impacted. But poverty was not their real identity. They were God's chosen people. So, as they traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem, as they shook off the vestiges of captivity by singing and praising, they remembered who they were. While they rehearsed all God had done for them, they remembered God's covenantal promise to restore their fortunes.

Only children who are confident of Mom's and Dad's love have the audacity to ask for abundant blessings after they've been in timeout! That's just what the Israelites did. They cried out to God to restore their fortunes like the streams in the Negev. This is significant. The Negev River was bone dry in the summers but when the winter rains came, it was like a new river. Water flowed freely and generously nourished the banks. Everything it touched was vibrant and blooming with life. They were bold enough to ask God to ask for abundant resources and Divine favor in every area of their life.

You might be in a summer right now but your winter rains are just around the corner. Get ready! When God rains in your life not only will you be refreshed, you will bless everything you come in contact with. There is no need to be hesitant to remind God of the promises to which you are an heir. Don't be content asking God for a thimble-sized blessing when God is willing to drench you!

Take the Prince and Pauper's test
https://identityproject.us/wp-content/uploads/Prince-and-Pauper-Test-editable.pdf

## Read:

Psalm 30:4-5. All you saints! Sing your hearts out to God! Thank him to his face! He gets angry once in a while, but across a lifetime there is only love.The nights of crying your eyes out give way to days of laughter. (MSG)

## Listen:

Believe For It
CeCe Winans

They say this mountain can't be moved
They say these chains will never break
But they don't know You like we do
There is power in Your name
We've heard that there is no way through
We've heard the tide will never change
They haven't seen what You can do
There is power in Your name
So much power in Your name
Move the unmovable
Break the unbreakable
God we believe,
God we believe for it
From the impossible
We'll see a miracle
God we believe,
God we believe for it

Power Posture

## Reflect:

I invite you to be courageous for a moment. What is something you would really like to have in your life, something so big you haven't given yourself permission to fully consider? Maybe it's a new career, an important relationship, a place you would love to travel, or something amazing you would love to do for someone else. Whatever it is, name it, then talk to God about it.

## Day Seven

In my life, I've had many seasons of exile, times when I've felt alone, abandoned, irrelevant, uncertain, impoverished, and even spiritually bankrupt. I've often felt like the woman in the old lotion commercial. One good wind would break me into a million pieces to be carried away on the first wind. It is possible you came to Day Seven of this journal feeling some of these same emotions. It is also quite possible to be in timeout in one area of your life while you are free in another. Here's the good news. Life is a journey filled with periods of timeout and freedom. The goal is to spend more time in freedom than in captivity.

Yes, you will weep. Things may not go the way you *want* them to. They might not be going the way you *prayed* they would go. But there is a remedy to living in timeout. It's all connected to the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping. Too many people reduce this to giving money. Psalm 126 gives you another thing to sow. You can sow your tears! You can sow them and expect to reap with songs of joy. God will turn your mourning into dancing. God will take the pain you give back to Him as a seed sown against the promise of a mighty harvest. If you're in timeout, now is the time to sow – money, time, talents, whatever it is you have. The act of sowing helps to take the focus off your pain as you look to God and give back to others.

When I was in a valley place, one where I thought I had nothing to give, God sent people to me so I could minister, not out of my strength, but out of my brokenness. I have to be honest. I didn't like it. I was angry God would expect me to dry the tears of others while my own were flowing freely. In this timeout, God reminded me that nothing is lost or wasted in His economy. The very thing that imprisons you can be the key that unlocks someone else's door. Your willingness to share (sow) will provoke God to take what you give (seed), watered by your tears, and return a harvest!

God is a God of multiplication and will never repay you with just any ole kind of harvest. God can take the seeds of a former captive and work a double miracle. You will get a harvest and more seeds to sow!! God gives you double for your trouble- not in the sweet by-and-by but in the land of the living! You never have to worry that God will default on His debt. God always pays with interest. God restores - not in trickles - but with streams and floods of blessings.

If you are in timeout today, now is the time to make up your mind to walk out. Even while you're pushing beyond barriers that threaten to keep you imprisoned, even with tears streaming down your face, even with your heart broken, you can sow. You can remind God of His promise to restore the years the locusts have devoured. Your life, though dry as the Negev River in the heat of summer can be flooded with the waters of God's love.

## Read:

Psalm 126: 4-5 And now, God, do it again — bring rains to our drought-stricken lives so those who planted their crops in despair will shout hurrahs at the harvest; so those who went off with heavy hearts will come home laughing, with armloads of blessing. (MSG)

## Listen:

Lord of the Harvest
Fred Hammond

You're Lord of the harvest and we worship You this day. Eternal Lord remains the same age to age. All our love, all our praise, night and day with this song and our lives, now we prove there's no one to take Your place. Lord You rule. We come to worship You. You are my daily bread. You are my living well. You are my present help. You are the Lord of the harvest.

## Reflect:

Reflect on an area of your life where there seem to be more tears than growth. How does knowing that your tears are so important to God that He records them in His book make you think differently about your tears? (Psalm 56:8) How can you sow your tears in expectation of a harvest?

*Aliyah's Joy*

# Activation Activity

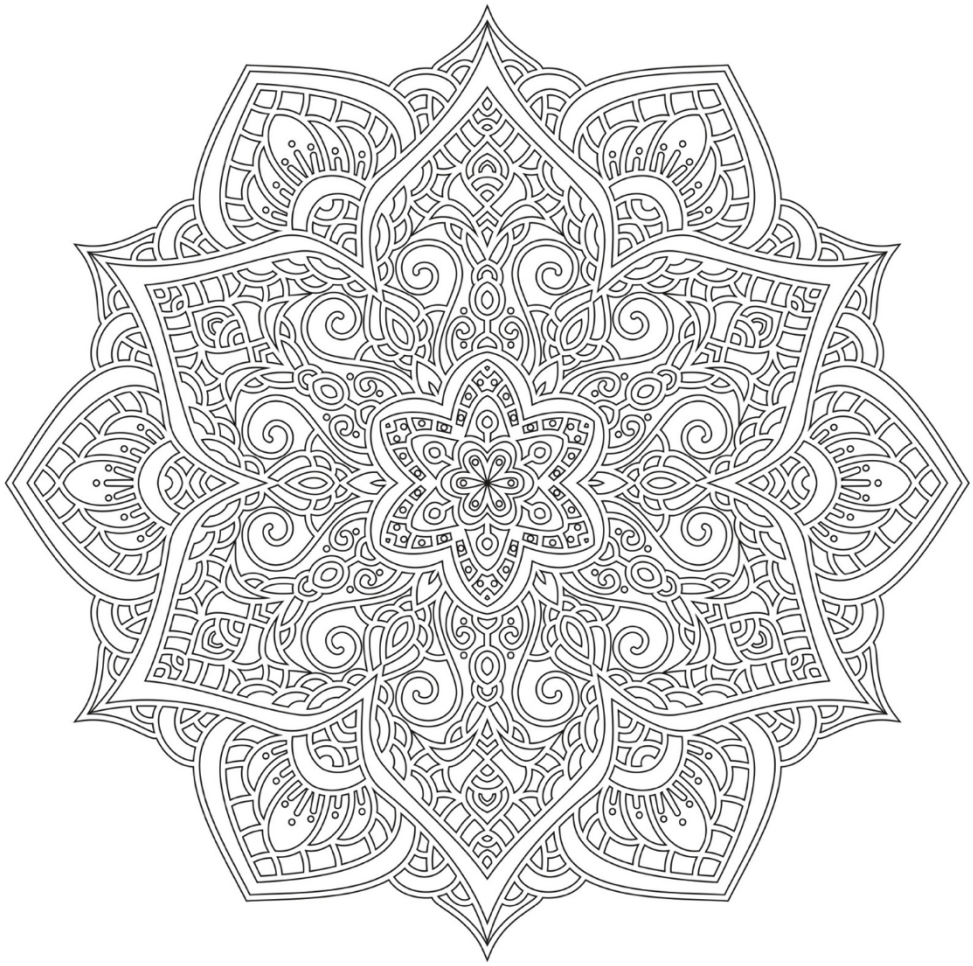
Today you will do an activation activity designed to help you hear God's voice.

- Find a place where you can sit comfortably and quietly for a while.
- Select your favorite quiet praise song or meditation music.
- Sit in stillness as you listen to the music. Imagine God sitting next to you. Welcome God into this time of intimacy and activation. Ask God to speak and open your heart to hear. Use the space below to write whatever flows from your mind and heart. Do not correct grammar, spelling, or censor what you write. Just keep the pen moving on the paper. Do not stop to read what you are writing or worry about whether it makes sense. Give yourself totally to the spontaneous flow of words and images. Believe God desires to be with you and wants to speak to you.
- Press through feelings of anxiousness and silence the voice of the doubter or critic. Keep writing until nothing else comes.
- Turn the paper over and just breathe deeply for a few minutes.
- Thank God for loving you and being with you during this activation.
- Turn the page to the front and slowly read what you wrote. See what God has spoken. Circle or highlight key phrases. You will likely be surprised!

## Reflect:

# Restoration Activity

Coloring and doodling can be powerful spiritual disciplines. As you color, allow Holy Spirit to minister. You might add words or other images as they come to mind. Extend the design to fill the entire page. There is no right or wrong way to do this. The goal is to simply be present.



# Transformation Action

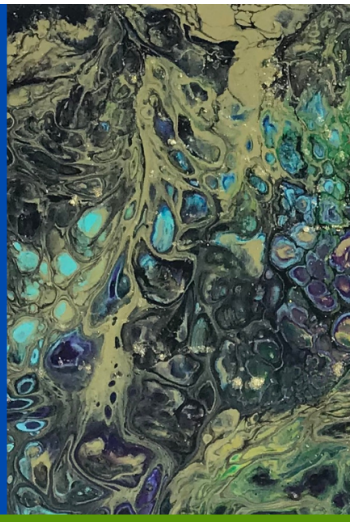
Take time to review your journey through reflections on *Psalm 126, From Timeout to Liberty*. Look for moments of revelation and take special note of them. As you read what you have written, look for insights you may have not fully processed. In what ways do you feel more able to redeem your periods of exile? Imagine yourself living in *total* liberty. What does that look like? How does it feel? As you continue the journey, celebrate every milestone.

## Listen:

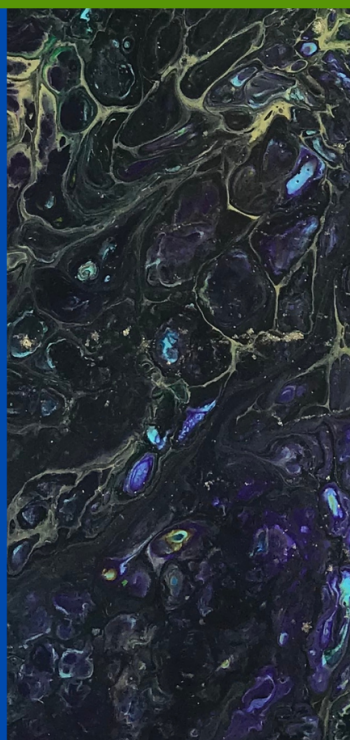
## Reflect:

Every Prayer
Israel Houghton and Mary Mary

I heard 'em say He brought me from a mighty long way
And now today I can testify that I believe it
And on my way I realized He's the one who kept me
When the storms of life arise, sleepless nights and desperate cries
He has captured every tear assuring me He hears
Every prayer, waiting on the answer only to discover He is near
And He hears every prayer for He has done great things
And I believe He's a God that always answers prayer
I heard 'em say the prayers of the righteous availeth much
And now today I can testify that I believe it
Now on my way I wanna let you know that He will keep you
When the storms of life arise, sleepless nights and desperate cries
He's captured every tear assuring me that He hears
Every prayer, waiting on the answer only to discover He is near
And He hears every prayer for He has done great things
I believe He's a God that always answers prayer
Don't despise the tears you've cried
Or the prayers that you have prayed
Heaven heard your every word
And the answer, the answer's on the way



**Seven-Day ART Journal: Activation, Restoration & Transformation, Psalm 126: From Timeout to Liberty, is the second volume in a series of week-long journals. Drawing inspiration from contemporary song lyrics and Holy Scripture, each volume offers guided reflection around the Journal theme and Activation, Restoration, and Transformation Activities designed to build faith. Each volume combines , prayer, original art work, coloring, doodling and writing prompts in an easy-to-use format.**



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**https://revdonc.wordpress.com**

The Watering Place

WORSHIP • ACTIVATION • TRANSFORMATION • ENCOUNTER • RESTORATION

## WATERING SESSIONS

# PROMPTS

# Dialogue or Journaling Starters

"We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet." (William Butler Yeats, The Celtic Twilight: Faerie and Folklore)

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"All journeys have a secret destination of which the traveler is unaware." (Martin Buber)

---

Within you, there is a stillness, a sanctuary, where you can retreat at any time and be yourself. (Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha)

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We don't have a choice about being in the tumbler; we do have a choice about whether to be crushed or smoothed. (unknown)

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Every beginning comes from some other beginning's end. Seneca (ca. 4 BC – 65 AD)

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The impeded stream is the one that sings! (Wendell Berry)

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Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over." Octavia E. Butler

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For violent fires soon burn out themselves; small showers last long, but sudden storms are short. (William Shakespeare, King Richard II)

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Every person needs to take one day away. A day in which one consciously separates the past from the future. Jobs, family, employers, and friends can exist one day without any one of us, and if our egos permit us to confess, they could exist eternally in our absence. Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us. (Maya Angelou, Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now)

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"Self-care is never a selfish act - it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch." (Parker J. Palmer, Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation)

The soul speaks its truth only under quiet, inviting, and trustworthy conditions. (Parker J. Palmer, Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation)

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Busyness is a drug that suppresses pain.

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Everything that happens to you is your teacher. The secret is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life…. And be taught by it. (Polly Borends)

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The ego hates to rest. The ego doesn't want to let God, or sleep, or rest or ???? mend up the raveled sleeve of care. The ego wants to handle it all by herself! Fretting springs from a determination to get our own way… All our fret and worry are caused by calculating without God (Oswood Chambers)

---

For humankind, a growing gap between our inner selves and outer selves -- an imbalance between how we live our lives and how we would like to live them-- leaves the spirit thirsting for renewal For many, renewal and re-creation come with time spent in the natural world. The human spirit

and the open landscape
are inextricably connected.
In feeling the spirit of
place,
we reconnect with the spirit
of self. (Sabra Field and J.
Lingelbach, Before Life
Hurries by)

---

Holding space is an act that
is at once totally present
and totally invisible. It is,
like the Tao, an activity that
is characterized by
paradox.
(Harrison Owens)

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Silence is good. HOLD
SACRED SPACE!
Listen with expectancy but
not with an expected
outcome. Trust the gift of
time and attention.

---

All journeys have a secret
destination of which the
traveler is unaware."
(Martin Buber)

---

Women need space and
silence. We too quickly
give away our energy.
There's something about
holding that richness.
(Natalie Goldberg)

---

Vulnerability is the
birthplace of love,
belonging, joy, courage,
empathy, and creativity. It
is the source of hope,
empathy, accountability,
and authenticity. If we want
greater clarity in our
purpose or deeper and
more meaningful spiritual
lives, vulnerability is the
path. (Brené Brown)

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When we no longer
know what to do,
we have come to our work.
When we no longer
know which way to go,
we have begun our
journey.
The mind that is not baffled
is not employed.

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What does it mean to hold
space for someone else? It
means that we are willing
to walk alongside another
person in whatever journey
they're on without judging
them, making them feel
inadequate, trying to fix
them, or trying to impact
the outcome. When we
hold space for other
people, we open our
hearts, offer unconditional
support, and let go of
judgment and control.
(Heather Plett)

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**Fire**
What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
A breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs packed in
too tight can douse the
flames almost as surely
as a pail of water would.

So building fires requires
attention to the spaces in
between as much as to the
wood.

When we are able to build
open spaces in the same
way we have learned
to pile on the logs, then we
can come to see how
it is fuel, and the absence
of fuel together, that make
fire possible.

We only need to lay a log
lightly from time to time.
A fire grows simply
because the space is there,
with openings in which the
flame That knows just how
it wants to burn can find its
way.
(Judy Sorum Brown,The
Sea Accepts All Rivers)

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How would you spend your
time if there were no inner
or outer expectations and
no worries about
resources? What if you
could focus entirely on
what your soul is
suggesting?

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For humankind, a growing gap between our inner selves and outer selves -- an imbalance between how we live our lives and how we would like to live them -- leaves the spirit thirsting for renewal. For many, renewal and re-creation come with time spent in the natural world. The human spirit and the open landscape are inextricably connected. In feeling the spirit of place, we reconnect with the spirit of self.
(Sabra Field and J. Lingelbach, Before Life Hurries By)

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We have become a nation of thoughtless rushers, intent
on doing before thinking**,** and hoping what we do magically works out. If it doesn't, we rush to do something else, something also not well thought-out, and then hope for more magic. (Len Holman)

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If it's not working, pushing harder is not the answer. It frankly does not make sense to occasionally 'fill up' with water, with long periods of dehydration in between. The same thing is true spiritually. Spiritual thirst is a need for living water. A constant flow of living water is far superior to sporadic sipping. (David Bednar)

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"A "successful" life has become a violent enterprise. We make war on our own bodies, pushing them beyond their limits; war on our children, because we cannot find enough time to be with them when they are hurt and afraid and need our company; war on our spirit, because we are too preoccupied to listen to the quiet voices that seek to
nourish and refresh us; war on our communities, because we are fearfully protecting what we have, and do not feel safe enough to be kind and generous; war on the earth, because we cannot take the time to place our feet on the ground and allow it to feed us, to taste its blessings and give thanks." (Wayne Muller)

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A walk in nature can help bring about one of the most essential acts a human being can perform: the stilling of the mind. For when the cacophony of disturbances, reactions, and self-talk subsides, like a windswept sea suddenly finding calm, the lens of our lives becomes a still, pure crystalline window for the cosmos to experience itself through. A walk in the natural world, with conscious mindfulness, can help bathe the sense in the implicate ordering of existence. Such a direct and immediate reminder does much to help steer us back to the center of ourselves." (David LaChapelle)

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One of the side effects of constant multitasking and "busyness" can be a lack of follow-through and completion. Loose ends and unfinished business wear us out, and lead to overwhelm, procrastination, and poor results. (Melissa McCreery)

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Simple truth: fast and busy are a choice**.** We choose to go fast and be busy because we think it'll get us what we want. All too often, it doesn't**.** Fast and busy makes life brittle**.** It makes us feel like every inch of space in life is locked in and there's no room to move. Instead of unlocking productivity and potential, it throttles both. It deludes us into feeling like we're getting more done faster, but in reality, we could get the same done in the same or less time with more grace by dialing it back**,** not forward. In the end, we're left feeling dissatisfied and helpless to extract ourselves from the process. Except we're not. It's all an illusion. (Jonathan Fields)

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*"Never be in a hurry; do everything quietly and in a calm spirit. Do not lose your inner peace even if your whole world seems upset." Saint Frances de Sales*

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If busyness can become a kind of violence, we do not have to stretch our perception very far to see that Sabbath time – effortless, nourishing rest – can invite a healing of this violence. When we consecrate a time to listen to the still, small voices, we remember the root of inner wisdom that makes work fruitful. We remember from where we are most deeply nourished and see more clearly the shape and texture of the people and things before us. (Wayne Muller)

Sabbath is that uncluttered time and space in which we can distance ourselves from our own activities enough to see what God is doing. (Eugene H. Peterson)

Sabbath observance invites us to stop. It invites us to rest. It asks us to notice that while we rest, the world continues without our help. (Wendell Berry)

It is time for us to breathe and build margin into our lives for God. Sabbath was intended as a gift which gives us delight. (Priscilla Shirer)

Sabbath, in the first instance, is not about worship. It is about work stoppage. (Walter Brueggemann)

Sabbath is the celebration of life beyond and outside productivity. (Walter Brueggemann)

If we only stop when we are finished with all our work, we will never stop, because our work is never completely done... Sabbath ... liberates us from the need to be finished. (Wayne Muller)

No matter how hard we try, we don't have the capacity to work seven days a week. We need to take this time [Sabbath] to rejuvenate. (Dan Buettner)

There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything, is to succumb to violence. The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful. (Thomas Merton)

There is in us an instinct for newness, for renewal, for a liberation of creative power. We seek to awaken in ourselves a force which really changes our lives from within. And yet the same instinct tells us that this change is a recovery of that which is deepest, most original, most personal in ourselves. To be born again is not to become somebody else, but to become ourselves. (Thomas Merton)

Contemplative Monk

I sometimes forget
that I was created for Joy.
My mind is too busy.
My Heart is too heavy
for me to remember
that I have been
called to dance
the Sacred dance of life.
I was created to smile
To Love
To be lifted up
And to lift others up.
O' Sacred One
Untangle my feet
from all that ensnares.
Free my soul.
That we might
Dance
and that our dancing
might be contagious.
(Hafiz)

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The Southwest is eight
years into a drought
Droughts can make you
superstitious,
change the way you pray
and to whom.
Droughts can make you
dream
of drums and magic,
make you change your
religion
like Old Noah almost did
parched and trembling one
night
secretly beside the burning
rock
wagering his uncertain soul
with God
"for just a sip from Your
deep cup."
And what a flood it was!
Noah had such a big soul
and God loves a gambler
who will bet everything
to find his original heart
and break the drought.
(Stephen Levine 2007)

---

A walk in nature can help bring about one of the most essential acts a human being can perform: the stilling of the mind. For when the cacophony of disturbances, reactions, and self-talk subsides, like a windswept sea suddenly finding calm, the lens of our lives becomes a still, pure crystalline window for the cosmos to experience itself through... A walk in the natural world, with conscious mindfulness, can help bathe the senses in the implicate ordering of existence. Such a direct and immediate reminder does much to help steer us back to the center of ourselves.
David LaChapelle
Friends of Silence (2004)

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"Intimacy in all human relationships—especially with God—can occur only as vulnerability and inadequacy are owned."
(Belden C. Lane, The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality)

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We're surrounded by a world that talks, but we don't listen. We're part of a community engaged in a vast conversation, but we deny our role in it. We haven't the courage to acknowledge our deep need for what we can't explain. The soul feeds on what takes us to the edge, but we don't go there willingly. Our longing is an echo of the Earth's."
(Belden C. Lane, The Great Conversation: Nature and the Care of the Soul)

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Underneath all the texts, all the sacred psalms and canticles, these watery varieties of sounds and silences, terrifying, mysterious, whirling and sometimes gestating and gentle must somehow be felt in the pulse, ebb, and flow of the music that sings in me. (Hildegard of Bingen)

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*It is good to have an end to journey towards, but it is the journey that matters in the end.* (Ursula K. LeGuin)

Too often, we live our lives from destination to destination. We look back and mark the significant accomplishments as the milestones that define our lives: a graduation, a new job, a move, or overcoming a tragedy. We look back with fondness and we look

desperately forward to the completion of the next: the accomplishment of a life goal, a significant desired award, a major life transition, finding the love of our life, or emerging from one of life's dark valleys triumphant. Unfortunately, life is not lived exclusively in these destinations. In fact, it is far more often lived in the pathways between them. Consider the fact that these destination moments are few. But the journeys between them are long. These moments between destinations are where we prepare ourselves – and are prepared – to accomplish the goal, to weather the storm, and to choose the next destination carefully.

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"We can make our minds so like still water that beings gather about us that they may see, it may be, their own images, and so live for a moment with a clearer, perhaps even with a fiercer life because of our quiet."

(William Butler Yeats, The Celtic Twilight: Faerie and Folklore)

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Within you there is a stillness, a sanctuary, where you can retreat at any time and be yourself. (Hermann Hesse, Siddhartha)

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**A Testimony**
Something that dropped in my spirit while driving to work this morning:

"The fields you have sown the most seeds may not be the same fields you reap your harvest from."

Some of the relationships you supported, showed up for, cheered on, and poured into the most, may not be the relationships that sow back into you.

Some of the workplaces and spaces you have been dedicated to, sacrificed for, and poured much excellence into, may not be the places and spaces that sow back into you.

Some of the churches where you have sown seeds, tithes, and loved on people well, may not be the churches that sow back into you.

But baby, hear me when I say this. You WILL reap a harvest. God's thoughts and ways are not like our thoughts and ways, but God is true to God's word and promises.
You will reap your harvest, and it will be unexpected and tenfold!

I'm a living witness!
(Marisa Hattab)

---

**SIMPLIFY**

**S**low Down
**I**magine Doing Less
**M**ake Time for Loved Ones
**P**ractice Patience
**L**earn to Quietly Say No
**I**ncrease Your Quiet Times
**F**ollow Your Heart
**Y**ield to LIFE

---

Guide Me, Please.

Think of something you would like to have more of in your life, Let's say health. Think about it and ask God to help guide me (I obviously need to take action as well; this helps get the energy moving). Begin to pay attention to who or what shows up in my life. Become aware of books, websites, blogs, trainers, healers, or nutritionists people might

recommend to me or that I just happen to stumble upon. Pay attention if I suddenly get a hunch to go somewhere or do something different, DO IT!! Look for the signs and the messages; they are EVERYWHERE just waiting to be seen and heard.

Sanctuary photos: give a bunch of photos from magazines or ones I've taken and ask people to choose two, breathe in and out, and reflect/ listen for where in the body the reflection is seated. Breathe in and out.

# Icebreakers

These icebreakers are based on the work of Chad Littlefield, Connection Before Content. It is critical to keep in mind that some of these may be triggering or require a safe space to respond.

"Remember, in order to truly be ***Connection before Content*** , your question or activity must accomplish these three things:

- Connect people to the **purpose** of why they're there
- **Connect people to each other** because without relatedness, no work can occur.
- Create space for **authenticity and vulnerability."**

**Name Origins:** Ask people to tell the origin of their names. If they do not know, give them permission to create the story. There is so much power in the story of our names. Remember to listen and not ask questions.

**Cultural Artifact.** Bring a picture of the actual artifact that has meaning. Invite people to tell the story of the artifact.

**Minute of Minutiae:** This is not for the beginning of an event. Give each person 60 seconds (only) to talk about anything they want to. Ex. I really love lightweight, shiny yarn. There is something about standing in the aisle that makes me feel as if I can do anything.

**Lessons From Leaders:** Talk about your leadership journey. Remember, leadership takes many forms so these might be professional home, church, school. The capacity doesn't matter. Ask people to repeat the lessons they learned from listening. This is very affirming.

**Thinking of Home:** Ask individuals to talk about a place they consider home. Why? What is it about that place that makes it home? Describe the sounds, smells, sights of home.

**Thoughts about time for reflection….**

Many Biblical passages highlight the attitude demonstrated by Jesus that all work committed to us by God can be done in God's timing, for the grace that entrusts the work to us also empowers it.

Our backwards sense of time is often intensified by our clock-driven scheduling. We try to cram everything we have to do in the amount of time we think we have, instead of letting each task take the amount of time it needs.

Ps. 127:2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil; for He gives sleep to his beloved.

If we can more fully develop a Sabbath way of life, then we recover the delight of time. Instead, for most of us, time is an enemy that makes us frantic. If we are pressured by the terrible 'shoulds,' we demonstrate our inability to fight the culture's emphasis on accomplishment and, at root, our refusal to live by grace.

Taken from *The Sense of The Call*: A Sabbath Way of Life For Those Who Serve God, The Church and The World (Eerdmans Publishing, 2006)

# Journal Prompts for the Liminal Space

by Heather Plett

## A. Liminal Space

*"Liminal space is a period in which something— social hierarchy, culture, belief, tradition, identity, etc.—has been dissolved and a new thing has not yet emerged to take its place. It's that period of uncertainty, ambiguity, restlessness, fear, discomfort, and anguish. It's the space between, when a trapeze artist lets go of one bar and doesn't yet know whether they will be able to catch the other bar." – Heather Plett, The Art of Holding Space: A Practice of Love, Liberation, and Leadership*

1. What is liminal in your life right now? What feels uncertain about your future?
2. How does liminal feel in your body? Move around as you consider the word and notice how your body holds it.
3. What have you let go of or moved away from?
4. What felt secure in the past but no longer feels secure?
5. What are you still clinging to from the past?
6. What are you happy to release from the past?
7. What are you grieving? How is grief living in your body?
8. Write a list of the emotions that have been emerging during this liminal space. (You can incorporate an art practice by assigning each emotion a colour and doing a finger painting with those colours.)
9. Are there relationships that will change as a result of this liminal space you're in? How do you feel about that?
10. Do you feel safe in this liminal space? Why or why not? What might help you feel safer?
11. One of my favourite mantras, which I try hard to embrace when I'm in liminal space, is "The outcome is not my responsibility." Say that mantra a few times to yourself and notice how it feels to say it. Write about how that feels.
12. Find a piece of music that represents liminal space. (Some of my favourites are Nothing Stays the Same, by Luke Sital-Singh; Carry On, by The Fortunate Ones; Change of Time, by Josh Ritter; Unsettled, by Justin Rutledge; and The Darkness, by Rose Cousins.) Listen to it and then write about the thoughts and feelings it evokes.
13. What is possible if you surrender to this moment?
14. What stories from the past might this liminal space be inviting you to let go of and/or rewrite?

## B. Rewriting old stories

*"Our old stories shape us into the people we are now. When we can hold those stories with compassion and grace, they help us grow and heal and become more grounded and emotionally strong. But when those stories still hold a strong emotional charge – anger, fear, frustration, resentment, etc., they can hold us back from that growth and healing. In those times, it can be valuable to find new ways of telling those stories." – Heather Plett*

***Note**: While this process can be healing and transformational for many, it might also be a triggering exercise for those with trauma. Exercise caution and, if necessary, seek therapeutic support. For those with trauma, it may be better to find alternative healing methods that don't risk bringing the trauma back to the surface (somatic healing, for example).*

1. List five moments in your life when something happened that changed the course of your life.
2. List five moments in your life when a relationship changed (ie. someone betrayed you, you let someone down, you changed your opinion of someone, you deepened your trust and commitment, new boundaries were erected, etc.)
3. List five moments when you surprised yourself with how much strength, courage, resilience, and/or wisdom you were capable of.
4. List five moments when you experienced joy.
5. Choose one of the stories from the lists you created that still holds some anger, pain, frustration, anxiety, disappointment, or other strong emotion. Write that story with as much detail as you can, including whatever emotions you were feeling throughout.
6. Notice how you feel after writing it. If those strong emotions are coming up again, take some time away from the page and be tender with yourself. Pour a cup of tea, go for a walk, talk to a friend – whatever helps you hold those emotions with tenderness.
7. When you are ready, revisit what you've written. You might want to try reading it out loud to yourself so that you can pay attention to what your voice reveals as you read it.
8. Ask yourself as many of the following questions as feel relevant (write your answers in your journal):
    a. Which parts of the story bring up the most emotional charge?
    b. What other feelings might be beneath the emotions that were revealed? (For example, sometimes anger is a mask for fear, and sometimes frustration is a mask for loneliness.)
    c. In what ways did you let yourself down in the story? How can you make that right for yourself now?
    d. In what ways did other people let you down in the story? How can you make that right for yourself now?
    e. In what ways did you show courage, resilience, strength, and wisdom in the story?
    *f.* Is there anyone from this story that you need to have a follow-up conversation with? If so, what is the nature of that conversation? *(Note: Writing a letter that you never send might be a sufficient way to practice this, even if the person is dead or no longer part of your life.)*

g. Is there anyone from this story that you need to have clearer boundaries with? If so, what should those boundaries look like?
h. Did you have unfair expectations of anyone in the story (including yourself)? If so, what is the longing beneath those expectations?
i. Are you holding anyone hostage by not releasing them from your expectations, not communicating your needs or boundaries, or holding onto resentment or desire for revenge?
j. What would give you peace? Are you relying on other people for that peace, or can you find it yourself?
k. Can you imagine another way of interpreting any parts of this story?
l. What might happen if you chose to free yourself from the story and/or the people in it? What does that freedom look like?
m. What if you imagine the story as a triumphant narrative, in which you were able to survive and thrive despite the odds?
n. How do you feel now?

9. When you're ready (take a few days, if you need time), write the story again.
   a. What shows up this time? How are you feeling about the story now?
   b. Is there anyone you want to share this new version of the story with?
   c. Does this feel complete, or do you want to repeat the process?
   d. Do you need to talk to anyone about the story?
   e. What new commitment do you need to make to yourself now?
   f. What have you learned?
10. If there has been transformation for you in this process, consider a **ritual** that might help you mark that transformation. Perhaps burning the old version of the story? Or turning it into art by painting over the old words? Or buying yourself a gift to mark the growth and transformation? Or throwing a party?

***Want to go deeper with your personal exploration? There is more like this in my online self-study program, Write for Love and Liberation. (https://centreforholdingspace.com/holding-space-online-courses/write-for-love-and-liberation/)***

## WATERING SESSIONS

# POEMS

**I Love the Rain**
**Donna Cox**

I love the sound of the rain,
beating against the windows,
A rhythmic tap tap tap on the roof
The wind carrying the rain in several directions at once
Creating a counter rhythm
A sudden silence,
Then a rapid renewal of the patter
Rhythm, rest
Tension and release
I love the sound of the rain
Pulsing through my body
The boom of random thunder
A quick flash of lightning
No fear of getting wet,
Of even being drenched

**Keep Pressing On**
**Donna M. Cox**

You are stronger than you think you are
You are more talented than you can imagine
You have more possibilities than you can see
You are wiser than you ever hope
You are all these things and more
Because you are made in the image of God
And God is all of these and more.
Keep pressing on!
Eyes have not seen
Ears have not heard
Nor has it entered into your imagination
Everything that God has prepared for you

**Poem for Pressing In**
**Donna M. Cox**

This morning feels sluggish;
pressing in takes effort.
The mind wants to wander along pathways of its own choosing.
Images of to-do lists
Echoes of unfinished conversations
Stomach grumbling and demanding to be fed vie for first place.
In a space that seems far off
I hear the melody and refrain,
'We lift you up; we lift you higher,'
And I know!
It doesn't matter what I- or even the atmosphere- 'feel' like,
I get to choose.
So I deliberately shift my thoughts to Holy Spirit Who patiently and lovingly bids me 'come '
And I set down my pen!

**Silent Flight**
**Chris Roe**

In the silence
The clarity of your voice,
Climbs high
Upon the eagle's wings.
The chains of doubt
That imprison my soul,
Fall away beneath my feet.
In the freedom and majesty
Of the sentinel's gaze,
Faith is strengthened
And hope returned
To a weary heart,
Upon the silent flight
Of eagle's wings.

**A Prayer in Spring**
**Robert Frost**

OH, give us pleasure in the flowers today;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;

**Direction (May I Suggest)**
**Egal Bohen**

If we lack a sense of direction in our lives
May I suggest, it might help to find out:

What we are
Where we are
Why we are here
What we want

And make us happy in the happy bees,
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird
That suddenly above the bees is heard,
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,
And off a blossom in mid air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,
To which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends he will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

Why we need it
And where (if anywhere)
We think we are going
(After having found all this out)

And perhaps, while on that path
We should also try to be nice.
Because we never know
When we might need some help
Along the way

**Sunday Morning**
**R.L. Nenonene**

Jesus is on
Mother of the church, deacon board, morning announcements
The main line, tell him
Sunday school, altar call, your favorite Pew
What you want
The usher board, tithes and offerings, the sick and shut in list
Jesus is on the main line
Amen Pastor, holy dance, tambourines
Tell him what you want
Peppermints, mama pinches, white sock with lace ruffles
You just
Big yellow hats, white gloves, handkerchiefs,
Call him up
Baptisms, sermon, hallelujah
And tell him
Pray list, sang girl, The doors of the church are open
What you want.

**Kindred Spirit**
**Chris Roe**

Walk awhile upon my journey
And steal a place in my heart,
With your eyes
Upon these words,
You, kindred spirit,
Can touch my soul.

**Our Real Work**
**Wendell Berry**

It may be that when we no longer
know what to do,
we have come to our real work
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey.
The mind that is not baffled is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.

**Holding Space**
**Gale Greenwood**

Amazing in its glory to feel such thankfulness As I finally came to recognize not once but many times The all of yous who so willingly held space for me During all of my darkness and all of my lightness to see. What an expression of love to feel pouring forth, Even if it were for just a second some meaningful encounter that held so much worth. Maybe it was just a moment and we helped one another grow. What if we all held space for each other until outwardly we glowed?

**In Contact**
**Michelle Anne Hobart**

holographic awakening
in this sacred container
catalyzing transformation
we find ourselves
in one another
always already whole
fractal unfurling of opportunity
labyrinthine certainty
infinite journey inward
take my hand,
we're nearly there.

**Untitled**
**Leslé Honoré**

It doesn't always look like darkness
Disheveled
Discombobulated
Sometimes it looks like dance
Like joy
Like syncopated rhythms
Like grace
Like choreography channeling
Ancestor's dreams
Powerful
Successful
Enviable
Sometimes we get so good
At the act
At the entertainment
At wearing the mask
That we can fool ourselves
A little bit
Long enough for the public
To believe
That we
Have it all together
That the airbrushed portrait
Is real
The Instagram smile
Is permanent
The steps aren't automatic
That happiness 24/7 isn't toxic
But the truth is
Living is hard
Lonely is real
Grief is too heavy to hold
People don't check
On the strong friends
The smiling friends
The dancing friends
The friends who look like
They are on top of the world
Looks are often liars
Hopelessness can grow
Like weeds in the most beautiful
Garden
It doesn't always look like
Darkness
And it's so hard to say the words
Out loud
"I need help
This is too much
I don't want to try anymore"
Because we clap for stunning
Clap for the performance
And ignore those in pain
It doesn't always look like darkness
Sometimes it just looks like
Our reflection
In the Mirror

**In The Beginning**
**Leslé Honoré**

I wish you love
Kindness
Understanding
I wish you abundance
That you will always have
More than enough
More than you need
So you can be generous
Of heart and spirit
I wish you peace
The kind that washes over your entire being
Like cool waves
On warm shores
Peace
Knowing that the distance
Is intentional
The endings
For a purpose
I wish you the peace
That comes
From honoring yourself
I wish you acceptance
Of your past
Your failures
Your successes
Your body, mind and soul
I wish you family that endures
Friendships as close as genes
I wish you a village
Linked and strong
I wish you a voice
That speaks
Even when it shakes
That announces dreams
Even if it has to whisper
I wish you the magic
Of manifestations
Of ancestors wrapping you in light
Of the God in you
Ordering your steps
Carving out destiny
I wish you healing
Of old wounds
Old loves
Old habits
Cycles broken
I wish you music
Art
Poetry
Dance
I wish you language for your soul
I wish you power
That empowers the powerless
I wish you boldness
Fearlessness
I wish you empathy

Sometimes it's just too hard
To stay in the light

If life feels like it is too much
to take one more step
let someone hold your hand while you walk
You aren't alone
You aren't the only one
I've had those thoughts too
You are not alone
I promise

I wish you
Epiphanies
Enlightenment
Ascension
I wish you
Joyful New Beginnings
Fresh New Chapters
Strength to start over
I wish you
A Happy New Year
*now look in the mirror
and read this to your beautiful self
Speak life to yourself
Love yourself
You are worthy*

**I Hope You Hold Space For Others**
**Megan Minutillo**

I hope you remember to hold space for others.

Hold space when they're tired,
when their bones are weary, and
their hearts are hurting, and
all they want to do is rest.

Hold space when they feel as though they
cannot breathe, as if their lungs can no longer hold
air, as if a tiny elephant is constantly sitting upon its
chest.

Hold space when they tell you that they're sad, and
they feel as if they're screaming in a crowded room,
and nobody turns to listen,
as if nobody in the world cares about their sadness.

I hope you remember to hold space for others.
Even when you're not sure what to say,
and when you don't understand their pain,
and when you have never walked their journey.
I hope you hold space for them still,
so that they know that they are seen,
so that they know that they are heard,
so that they know that they are loved.

**Eternal Journey**
**Chris Roe**

As the crimson flame of life
Breaks slowly
Above the horizon,
The white frosted meadows,
With trees and hedgerows
Of sculptured ice,
Speak loudly
Of your presence.
Once more
Upon this journey,
As another day begins,
Without effort
Or intrusion,
Through the peace
And tranquility
Of your silent voice,
The moment becomes eternal
And the journey
Begins again.

**When The World Feels Awful**
**Megan Minutillo**

When the world feels awful,
it's easy to look outward,
to read stories from people who you will never see,
to watch life unfold in places you have never been.

**May I Suggest**
**Rick Lupert**

*Command the children of Israel to banish*
*from the camp all those afflicted…*
-Numbers 5:2
No one understands a quarantine
better than everyone alive today

But what if,
when the world feels awful,
we looked in?
What if we looked inside the walls of our home,
and listened to the conversations we are having,
and the ideas that we are planting,
and the actions that we are taking?
What if we looked inside the depths of our souls,
and paid closer attention to the things we held onto,
and the ideas we cling to,
and the places where we've changed?
Maybe, if we looked in, we'd hear the subtly
of the human heart:
each time it beats, and
each time it cracks, and
each time it grows.
Maybe, if we looked in, we'd see that
there is no need to fear the mud of our messes,
for beautiful things can spring from dirt.
*Maybe.*

But it's a sensitive subject to
send people away when there are
those who have stated they'd rather
all of us be in the sea.
May I suggest a hospital tent?
May I suggest we take all the walls
and not give them back?
May I suggest we remember
the dirt was here before our buildings?
May I suggest we let the doctors
take a look before we send anyone away?
May I suggest the property laws
may be binding, but before they were
written down, our first guy
opened up his tent? May I suggest
beating hearts and hunger
take precedence over technicalities?
May I suggest tearing down
is the weapon of the one who
feels they're owed something?
May I suggest, everyone gets to go
on the forty-year walk, and when we
get to where we're going, we do more
than care for the trees of the people
who are already there? If you take
even one of my suggestions, we'll really be
going somewhere and I'll
be ready to make my offering to the One.

**Holding Space**
**Lynne Nardizzi**

I can hold space for you
in your darkest hour
in your time of need
I will hold space for you
when you hurt
alone
in the middle of the night
I want to hold space for you
just know
that I am here
remember
that love has no boundaries
knows no time
distance or space
so when I think of you
always
I am with you
sharing your pain

**Silence**
**Donna Cox**

Silence can be very loud.
It rings through the walls, from room to room.
Its breeze chills even the most intimate of spaces.
It speaks volumes.
It criticizes.
It complains.
It tells you things about who you are – mostly lies,
but oh, they seem so true…. in the silence.

Silence can cut like a knife.
It pierces into already broken places.
It unsettles the barely mended.
It draws blood from wounds, old and new.

Silence.
For some so comforting and easy;
For others, a wilderness space with unseen prey,
waiting to devour hope.

**Give Me Your Wild Dreams: A Poem To Hold Space for Those Who Dare to Believe.**
**Henley Worthen**

**The Peace of Wild Things**
**Wendell Berry**

Give me your delusions
Give me your insane ideas
Come to me with all the propositions you are too afraid to breath into sunlight
Feed me the slice of your heart that dares to dream and I will look at you, marvel at you with starry eyes and say
*when do we begin?*
i will look at you and not just hope and say good luck idiot
but know firmly that you can arrive there.
There are so many people in this world who are going to look at you like a crackhead on the side of highway 95 looking for the entrance to the milky way when you say tell them want to be a painter, cinematographer, that you want to make houses out of silly putty for a living.
but my love, i promise you i will look at you with fullness of heart and you to show me the blueprints.
In a world where people scoff at the ones who refuse to "grow out" of dreams and call them unrealistic, we need more dream believers.
We need to realize that people who tell us never are speaking out of their own fear, their own blocks and disbelief. And from those people, I urge you, protect your dream fetus.
Do not let vampires suck the blood of a dream to young to yet walk. And seek people who will believe in your baby before it's seen the light of day. Seek the ones crazy enough to believe.
If you say I want to be an alien when I grow up
I am counting down the days until I can come to your first earth landing and I will stand and applaud as you deboard that spacecraft.
I will bring you fat camellias and say I always knew you'd do it.
why?
because I'm a believer.
I remember your power.
Because dreams don't come from nowhere, they come from somewhere up there in the heavens
You weren't born to sort taxes or sell houses, my love. No god, no matter how hellish sent you here to do that.
You were born with an intuition nestled into the red vessels of your heart.
You were born with a knowing of your destiny.
And when you first dreamt that dream your mind was still free
It didn't think within a timeline that said 50k by 25 and kids 5.25 years after so you're financially stable but still young enough to play, and cue the midlife crisis at 57 then travel once you've retired and your knobby knees are aching.
You were born knowing your power was infinite.
You ripped into this world screaming to be heard.
You beautiful thing, you have always known where to focus your energy.

When despair grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting for their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

**Dreams**
**Langston Hughes**

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

**Woman Work**
**Maya Angelou**

I've got the children to tend
The clothes to mend
The floor to mop
The food to shop
Then the chicken to fry
The baby to dry
I got company to feed
The garden to weed
I've got shirts to press
The tots to dress
The can to be cut
I gotta clean up this hut
Then see about the sick
And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine
Rain on me, rain
Fall softly, dewdrops
And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here
With your fiercest wind
Let me float across the sky
'Til I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes

You have only forgotten
And I forgot, too.
Such a silly thing, the way we forget only to
remember again.
I have remembered
and I remember you because we were once one.
I remember your dreams and the way you dance
along waves as big as Tanjong.
Your dreams are not jokes to me
they are evidence of god. signed.
“i made this – love, yours truly”
if you want it, go get it.
I will open my door to you any day of the week
let’s sit down, have a cold cup of coffee
Show me the blueprints
Show me where the rafters will go.
Build that house out of silly putty,
and I will bring over casserole for dinner.

Cover me with white
Cold icy kisses and
Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky
Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone
Star shine, moon glow
You're all that I can call my own.

**Phenomenal Woman**
**Maya Angelou**

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much

**I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings**
**Maya Angelou**

The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing

But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman

Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

**Touched By An Angel**
**Maya Angelou**

We, unaccustomed to courage
exiles from delight
live coiled in shells of loneliness
until love leaves its high holy temple
and comes into our sight
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives
and in its train come ecstasies
old memories of pleasure
ancient histories of pain.
Yet if we are bold,
love strikes away the chains of fear
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity
In the flush of love's light
we dare be brave
And suddenly we see
that love costs all we are
and will ever be.
Yet it is only love
which sets us free.

The Watering Place

WORSHIP • ACTIVATION • TRANSFORMATION • ENCOUNTER • RESTORATION

## WATERING SESSIONS

# SONG LYRICS

**A Rose Is Still A Rose (Aretha Franklin)**

There was a rose I knew
I met her once or twice before
she was a pretty sweet thing,
not the least bit insecure

Then you came with your slick
game and played with her
youth, unashamed of the way
you lied, played with the truth

She never knew what hit her
Steal her honey, then forget
her. A rose, she wears a flower
tryin' to forget about you

'Cause a rose is still a rose
Baby girl, you're still a flower
He can't lead you and then take
you, make you and then break
you. Darlin', you hold the power

Now believe me when I tell you
that I've been hurt myself when
he tells you that he loves you
and sees nobody else

And now you're so tough tryin'
to wear tight clothes and things
tossin' and flossin' tryin' to fill
the void heartbreak brings

Oh yeah, when she faces the
mirror she's cryin', you can't
hear her. Now the rose is still a
rose. She wears a flower, tryin'
to forget about you

Let your life be in the sunshine
Not the darkness of your sorrow
You may see you're all today
When you know it'll come
tomorrow

Tough to be, but life ain't over.
Just because your man is gone.
Girl, love yourself and love to
love 'cause without him your life
goes on

---

**Against All Odds (Take A Look At Me Now) (Phil Collins)**

How can I just let you walk
away, just let you leave without
a trace when I stand here taking
every breath with you. You're
the only one who really knew
me at all

How can you just walk away
from me when all I can do is
watch you leave. Cause we've
shared the laughter and the
pain and even shared the tears
You're the only one who really
knew me at all

So take a look at me now,
there's just an empty space
And there's nothing left here to
remind me, just the memory of
your face

Take a look at me now, there's
just an empty space
And you coming back to me is
against the odds and that's
what I've got to face

I wish I could just make you turn
around and see me cry
There's so much I need to say to
you, so many reasons why
you're the only one who really
knew me at all

But to wait for you, is all I can do
and that's what I've got to face.
Take a good look at me now,
cause I'll still be standing here
and you coming back to me is
against all odds it's the chance
I've gotta take. Take a look at
me now

---

**Ain't Got Far To Go (Jess Glynne)**

Birds fly, we turned finally free.
Patience lost, I began to lose
me. My advice would be take a
breath, close your eyes and
take a step

I wasn't scared, I fought this on
my own. You pulled me down
and I let you go.
I told you I would prove you
wrong and now I'm here and
I'm standing strong.
I know that I ain't got far to go
cause I spent forever waiting
and it's no longer a dream and
now I've landed on my feet and
I ain't got far to go

Hold tight, rollercoaster, here
we go, Florida, Orlando, I ain't
playing with you. Day one, I said
I'd go for me
One box ticked, got a lot to
beat

Cause I spent forever waiting
And it's no longer a dream
And now I've landed on my
feet. And I ain't got far to go

I'm here to stay, I'm here to
stay. Amen
And if I had to go back in time I
would just do it again
I ain't got far to go. I know, I
ain't got far to go

---

**Alive (P.O.D.)**

Every day is a new day
I'm thankful for every breath I take. I won't take it for granted so I learn from my mistakes. It's beyond my control, sometimes it's best to let go whatever happens in this lifetime. I trust in love.
You have given me peace of mind. I feel so alive for the very first time. I can't deny you. I feel so alive
for the very first time
And I think I can fly
Sunshine upon my face
A new song for me to sing
Tell the world how I feel inside even though it might cost me everything
Now that I know this, so beyond, I can't hold this
I can never turn my back away now that I've seen you
I can never look away

---

**All Around Me (Flyleaf)**

My hands are searching for you.
My arms are outstretched towards you.
I feel you on my fingertips
My tongue dances behind my lips for you
This fire rising through my being. Burning, I'm not used to seeing you. I'm alive.
I can feel you all around me
Thickening the air I'm breathing, holding on to what I'm feeling, savoring this heart that's healing
My hands float up above me
And you whisper you love me and I begin to fade
Into our secret place
The music makes me sway
The angels singing say we are alone with you
I am alone and they are too with you. I'm alive
I can feel you all around me
Thickening the air I'm breathing; holding on to what I'm feeling, savoring this heart that's healing
So I cry Holy,
The light is white, Holy
And I see you I'm alive
Take my hand
I give it to you
Now you own me, all I am
You said you would never leave me, I believe you
I believe

---

**Alyssa Lies (Jason Michael Carroll)**

My little girl met a new friend
Just the other day on the playground at school between the tires and the swings but she came home with tear-filled eyes and she said to me "Daddy, Alyssa Lies"

I just brushed it off at first cause I didn't know how much my little girl had been hurt or the things she had seen. I wasn't ready when I said you can tell me and she said Alyssa Lies to the classroom. Alyssa lies every day at school. Alyssa lies to the teachersa s she tries to cover every bruise

My little girl laid her head down that night to go to sleep as I stepped out the room I heard her say a prayer so soft and sweet. God bless my mom and my dad and my new friend Alyssa. I know she needs you bad
I had the worst night of sleep in years as I tried to think of a way to calm her fears. I knew exactly what I had to do but when we got to school on Monday I heard the news.
My little girl asked me why everybody looked so sad
The lump in my throat grew bigger with every question that she asked until I felt the tears run down my face
And I told her that Alyssa wouldn't be at school today
She doesn't lie in the classroom. She doesn't lie
anymore at school. Alyssa lies with Jesus because there's nothing anyone would do
Tears filled my eyes, when my little girl asked me why Alyssa lies. Daddy tell me why Alyssa lies

---

**As (Stevie Wonder)**

As around the sun the earth knows she's revolving
And the rosebuds know to bloom in early May
Just as hate knows love's the cure you can rest your mind assure that I'll be loving you always. As now can't reveal the mystery of tomorrow but in passing will grow older every day. Just as all is born is new, do know what I say is true that I'll be loving you always

Until the rainbow burns the stars out in the sky, until the ocean covers every mountain high, until the dolphin flies and parrots live at sea
Until we dream of life and life becomes a dream

Did you know that true love

asks for nothing. Her
acceptance is the way we pay.
Did you know that life has given
love a guarantee
to last through forever and
another day. Just as time knew
to move on since the beginning
and the seasons know exactly
when to change
Just as kindness knows no
shame, know through all your
joy and pain that I'll be loving
you always
As today I know I'm living but
tomorrow could make me the
past but that I mustn't fear for I'll
know deep in my mind. The
love of me I've left behind
'cause I'll be loving you always

Until the day is night and night
becomes the day

Until the trees and seas just up
and fly away
Until the day that 8x8x8 is 4--
Until the day that is the day that
are no more
Did you know that you're loved
by somebody?
Until the day the earth starts
turning right to leftUntil the
earth just for the sun denies
itself
I'll be loving you forever
Until dear Mother Nature says
her work is through--- Until the
day that you are me and I am
you. Until the rainbow burns the
stars out in the sky. We all know
sometimes life hates and
troubles
Can make you wish you were
born in another time and space
But you can bet your life times
that and twice its double
That God knew exactly where
he wanted you to be placed so
make sure when you say you're
in it but not of it. You're not
helping to make this earth a
place sometimes called Hell
Change your words into truths
and then change that truth into
love
And maybe our children's
grandchildren
And their great-great
grandchildren will tell
I'll be loving you
Until we dream of life and life
becomes a dream

---

**Video/Average Girl**
**(India Arie)**

Sometimes I shave my legs and
sometimes I don't.
Sometimes I comb my hair and
sometimes I won't
Depend of how the wind blows
I might even paint my toes. It
really just depends on whatever
feels good in my soul
I'm not the average girl from
your video and I ain't built like a
supermodel. But I learned to
love myself unconditionally,
Because I am a queen
I'm not the average girl from
your video. My worth is not
determined by the price of my
clothes. No matter what I'm
wearing I will always be
India.Arie
When I look in the mirror and
the only one there is me
Every freckle on my face is
where it's supposed to be
And I know my creator didn't
make no mistakes on me
My feet, my thighs, my Lips, my
eyes, I'm loving what I see
Am I less of a lady if I don't wear
panty hose? My momma said a
lady ain't what she wears but
what she knows. But I've drawn
the conclusion, it's all an illusion
Confusion's the name of the
game. A misconception, a vast
deception, something got to
change

Now don't be offended this is
all my opinion, ain't nothing that
I'm saying law.
This is a true confession of a life
learned lesson. I was sent here
to share with y'all
So get in when you fit in
Go on and shine
Clear your mind
Now's the time
Put your salt on the shelf
Go on and love yourself
'Cause everything's gonna be
alright
Keep your fancy drink, and your
expensive minks; I don't need
that to have a good time. Keep
your expensive cars and your
caviar, All I need is my guitar
Keep your crystal and your
pistol, I'd rather have a pretty
piece of crystal don't need you
silicone, I prefer my own
What god gave me is just fine…

---

**Awaken (Yes)**

High vibration go on
to the sun. Oh, let my heart
dreaming past a mortal as me.
Where can I be?
Wish the sun to stand still
reaching out to touch our all
being past all mortal as we
Here we can be
Suns High Streams Through
Awaken gentle mass touch
Strong Dreams Reign | Here
Awaken gentle mass touch
Star Song Age Less
Workings of man set to ply out
historical life
Regaining the flower of the fruit

of his tree all awakening
All restoring you

Workings of man crying out
from the fire set aflame
By his blindness to see
That the warmth of his being
Is promised for his seeing
His reaching so clearly

Workings of man
Driven far from the path
Rereleased in inhibitions
So that all is left for you
Master of images
Songs cast a light on you
Hark thru dark ties
That tunnel us out of sane
existence in challenge as direct
as eyes see young stars
assemble

Master of light
All pure chance
As exists cross divided
In all encircling mode
Oh closely guided plan
Awaken in our heart

Master of sou0l set to touch
All impenetrable youth
Ask away that thought be
contact with all that's clear
Be honest with yourself
There's no doubt

Master of time setting sail
Overall our lands and as we
look forever closer shall we now
bid farewell

High vibration go on to the sun,
oh let my heart dreaming past a
mortal as me, Where can I be

Wish the sun to stand still
Reaching out to touch our own
being
Past all mortal as we
Here we can be

Like the time I ran away
Turned around and you were
standing close to me
Like the time I ran away
Turned around and you were
standing close to me

---

**Optimistic (Sound of Blackness)**

Keep, keep on
Never say die when in the midst
of sorrow you can' t see up
when looking down
A brighter day tomorrow will
bring

You hear the voice of reason
Telling you this can't never be
done
No matter how hard reality
seems
Just hold on to your dreams

Don't give up and don't give in
although it seems you never
win. You will always pass the
test as long as you keep your
head to the sky
You can win as long as you
keep your head to the sky
Be optimistic

If things around you crumble
No, you don't have to stumble
and fall. Keep pushing on and
don't you look back

I know of storms and strive
I been around them all of life
Just think ahead and you'll be
inspired
To reach higher and higher.

You'll always do your best
If you learn to never say never.
You may be down, but you're
not out.

---

**Because You Loved Me (Celine Dion)**

For all those times you stood by
me; For all the truth that you
made me see; For all the joy
you brought to my life
For all the wrong that you made
right
For every dream you made
come true; For all the love I
found in you I'll be forever
thankful baby. You're the one
who held me up, never let me
fall. You're the one who saw me
through it all

You were my strength when I
was weak. You were my voice
when I couldn't speak. You
were my eyes when I couldn't
see. You saw the best there was
in me. Lifted me up when I
couldn't reach. You gave me
faith 'coz you believed I'm
everything I am
because you loved me

You gave me wings and made
me fly. You touched my hand I
could touch the sky. I lost my
faith, you gave it back to me.
You said no star was out of
reach
You stood by me and I stood
tall. I had your love I had it all
I'm grateful for each day you
gave me. Maybe I don't know
that much. But I know this much
is true
I was blessed because I was
loved by you

**Believe (Brooks And Dunn)**

Old man Wrigley lived in that white house down the street where I grew up. Momma used to send me over with things. We struck a friendship up. I spent a few long summers out on his old porch swing. Says he was in the war when in the navy
Lost his wife, lost his baby
Broke down and asked him one time, How ya keep from going crazy. He said I'll see my wife and son in just a little while. I asked him what he meant. He looked at me and smiled, said

I raise my hands, bow my head. I'm finding more and more truth in the words written in red. They tell me that there's more to life than just what I can see. Oh I believe

Few years later I was off at college talkin' to mom on the phone one night, getting all caught up on the gossip the ins and outs of the small town life. She said oh by the way son, old man Wrigley's died.

Later on that night, I laid there thinkin' back. Thought 'bout a couple long-lost summers. I didn't know whether to cry or laugh
If there was ever anybody deserved a ticket to the other side. It'd be that sweet old man who looked me in the eye, said

I can't quote the book
The chapter or the verse
You can't tell me it all ends
In a slow ride in a hearse

You know, I'm more and more convinced the longer that I live this can't be all there is

**Better Day (Dianne Reeves)**

Silver gray hair neatly combed in place.
There were four generations of love on her face.
She was so wise, no surprise passed her eyes,
She'd seen it all.

I was a child, oh, about three or four. All day I'd ask questions. At night I'd ask more. But whenever; she never, would ever, turn me away.

I'd say how can I be sure what is right or wrong?
And why does what I want always take so long ?
Please tell me where does God live and why won't He talk to me?

I'd say, Grandma, what is love?
Will I ever find out?
Why are we so poor, what is life about? I want to know the answers before I fall off to sleep.

She sort of smiled as she tucked me in. Then she pulled up that old rockin' chair once again. But tonight she was slightly, remarkably
different somehow

Slowly she rocked, lookin' half asleep. Grandma yawned as she stretched.
Then she started to speak.
What she told me, would mold me, and hold me
together inside.

She said all the things you ask you will know someday.
But you have got to live in a patient way. God put us here by

fate and by fate that means better days.

She said, child we are all moons in the dark of night.
Ain't no morning gonna come 'til the time is right.
Can't get to better days lest you make it through the night. You gotta make it through the night, yes you do.

You can't get to no better days unless you make it through the night. Oh, you will see those better days
But you gotta be patient.

Later that year, at the turn of spring, heaven sent angels down and gave Grandma her wings. Now, she's flying, and sliding, and gliding in better days

And although I'm all grown up I still get confused.
I stumble through the dark getting bumped and bruised.
When night gets in my way
I could still hear my Grandma say You can't get to no better days unless you make it through the night baby.
(Be patient) Oh, you will see those better days
But you gotta be patient.
Child, do you hear me, yeah.

Oh Grandma, oh Grandma
Do you see me now?

She used to sit me on her knee. She used to comb my hair. She used to tell me stories. My Grandma took me everywhere

---

**Better Days (Goo Goo Dolls)**

And you ask me what I want this year and I try to make this kind and clear just a chance that maybe we'll find better days. Cause I don't need boxes wrapped in strings and designer love and empty things, just a chance that maybe we'll find better days

So take these words and sing out loud cause everyone is forgiven now. Cause tonight's the night the world begins again

I need someplace simple where we could live and something only you can give
And that's faith and trust and peace while we're alive
And the one poor child who saved this world and there's 10 million more who probably could If we all just stopped and said a prayer for them

I wish everyone was loved tonight and somehow stop this endless fight, just a chance that maybe we'll find better days

---

**Black Butterfly (Deniece Williams or Tamia)**

Morning light, silken dream to flight as the darkness gave way to dawn. You've survived, now your moment has arrived. Now your dream has finally been born

Black Butterfly, sailed across the waters tell your sons and daughters what the struggle brings. Black Butterfly, set the skies on fire rise up even higher so the ageless winds of time can catch your wings

While you slept, the promise was unkept but your faith was as sure as the stars
Now you're free, and the world has come to see
Just how proud and beautiful you are

Let the current lift your heart and send it soaring. Write the timeless message clear across the sky so that all of can read it and remember when we need it. That a dream conceived in truth can never die. Butterfly

Cause now that you're free and the world has come to see just how proud and beautiful you are

Fly butterfly fly

---

**Black Butterfly" – Sounds Of Blackness**

Black Butterfly, you can do most anything your heart desires.
Freedom comes with understanding who you are.
It’s time to reclaim your place amongst the stars.
Spread your wings and fly.
Awakening, a genius has been asleep too long. A people with a beauty rich and strong. A heritage that rates second to none.
Original, your qualities don’t change them to fit in. Now that you are on top keep rising.
Experience new life, be born again. Black Butterfly, you can do most anything your heart desires.

Freedom comes from understanding who you are.
It's time to reclaim your place amongst the stars.
Spread your wings and fly.
What's going on? Truth not revealed unless you choose to see past generations lost in history to hide our culture and our identity
Keep your pride. You can't be another color, Butterfly
So, when you shine let everybody see the light
cause you know out of sight means out of mind.

---

**Bridge Over Troubled Water (Simon And Garfunkel)**

When you're weary, feeling small; when tears are in your eyes I'll dry them all
I'm on your side when times get bad. And friends just can't be found. Like a bridge over troubled water, I will lay me down.

When you're down and out
When you're on the street
When evening falls so hard
I will comfort you. I'll take your part when darkness comes and pain is all around
Like a bridge over troubled water I will lay me down

Sail on silver girl, sail on by
Your time has come to shine
All your dreams are on their way. See how they shine when you need a friend
I'm sailing right behind
Like a bridge over troubled water I will ease your mind

---

**Bring Me To Life (Evanescence)**

How can you see into my eyes like open doors?
Leading you down into my core where I've become so numb.
Without a soul, my spirit's sleeping somewhere cold until you find it there and lead it back home
Wake me up inside
Call my name and save me from the dark. Bid my blood to run before I come undone
Save me from the nothing I've become
Now that I know what I'm without you can't just leave me.
Breathe into me and make me real. Bring me to life
Bring me to life. I've been living a lie, there's nothing inside.
Bring me to life
Frozen inside without your touch without your love, darling, only you are the life among the dead
All this time I can't believe I couldn't see, kept in the dark but you were there in front of me I've been sleeping a thousand years it seems
Got to open my eyes to everything without a thought, without a voice, without a soul.
Don't let me die here. There must be something more

---

**Can You Stand The Rain (New Edition)**

On a perfect day I know that I can count on you. when that's not possible tell me can you weather the storm?
Cause I need somebody who will stand by me through the good times and bad, times she will always be right there.
Sunny days everybody loves them tell me baby can you stand the rain? Storms will come, this we know for sure
Can you stand the rain?

---

**Circle Of Life (Elton John)**

From the day we arrive on the planet and blinking, step into the sun
There's more to be seen than can ever be seen
More to do than can ever be done
Some say eat or be eaten
Some say live and let live
But all are agreed as they join the stampede
You should never take more than you give
In the circle of life
It's the wheel of fortune
It's the leap of faith
It's the band of hope
Till we find our place
On the path unwinding
In the circle, the circle of life
Some of us fall by the wayside
And some of us soar to the stars and some of us sail through our troubles and some have to live with the scars.There's far too much to take in here. More to find than can ever be found. But the sun rolling high through the sapphire sky keeps great and small on the endless round

---

**Climb Every Mountain (Rodger and Hammerstein)**

Climb ev'ry mountain
Search high and low
Follow ev'ry by-way
Every path you know

Climb ev'ry mountain
Ford ev'ry stream
Follow ev'ry rainbow
'Til you find your dream
A dream that will need
All the love you can give
Every day of your life
For as long as you live
Climb ev'ry mountain
Ford ev'ry stream
Follow ev'ry rainbow
'Til you find your dream
'Til you find your dream

**Closer (Goapele)**

Closer to my dreams
It's coming over me
I'm gettin' higher, closer to my dreams. I'm getting higher and higher, feel it in my sleep
Sometimes it feels like I'll never go past here
Sometimes it feels like I'm stuck forever and ever
But, I'm going higher
Closer to my dreams
I'm goin' higher and higher
I can almost reach
Sometimes you just have to let it go leaving all my fears to burn down, push them all away so I can move on, closer to my dreams, feel it all over my being, close your eyes and see what you believe

I'm happy as long as we're apart then I'm moving on to my dreams
I'm moving (Higher and higher) higher and higher
(Higher and higher)
Moving higher, oh...

Sometimes it feels like you never gon 'change but you never choose to walk away

---

**Compass (Lady Antebellum)**

It's been a bumpy road
Roller coasters
High and low
Fill the tank and drive the car
Pedal fast, pedal hard
You won't have to go that far

You wanna give up 'cause it's dark. We're really not that far apart so let your heart, sweetheart, be your compass when you're lost and you should follow it wherever it may go. When it's all said and done you can walk instead of run 'cause no matter what you'll never be alone

Forgot directions on your way. Don't close your eyes; don't be afraid. We might be crazy late at night I can't wait til you arrive. Follow stars you'll be alright

---

**It's My Life (Bon Jovi)**

This ain't a song for the broken-hearted. No silent prayer for the faith-departed
I ain't gonna be just a face in the crowd . You're gonna hear my voice when I shout it out loud
It's my life. It's now or never
I ain't gonna live forever
I just want to live while I'm alive . My heart is like an open highway like Frankie said I did it my way. I just wanna live while I'm alive
It's my life
This is for the ones who stood their ground
For Tommy and Gina who never backed down
Tomorrow's getting harder make no mistake
Luck ain't even lucky
Got to make your own breaks
Better stand tall when they're calling you out
Don't bend, don't break, baby, don't back down

---

**Beautiful (Christina Aguilera)**

Don't look at me
Every day is so wonderful
Then suddenly it's hard to breathe. Now and then I get insecure from all the pain
I'm so ashamed. I am beautiful. No matter what they say words can't bring me down. I am beautiful
in every single way Yes words can't bring me down
So don't you bring me down today. To all your friends you're delirious. So consumed in all your doom,
Trying hard to fill the emptiness.
The pieces gone
Left the puzzle undone
Ain't that the way it is
You're beautiful
So don't you bring me down today No matter what we do No matter what we say we're the song inside the tune, full of beautiful mistakes, and everywhere we go the sun will always shine And tomorrow we might awake

---

**We Are the Champions (Queen)**

I've paid my dues time after time I've done my sentence
But committed no crime
And bad mistakes, I've made a

few, I've had my share of sand kicked in my face but I've come through

We are the champions, my friends and we'll keep on fighting 'til the end
We are the champions

No time for losers cause we are the champions of the world. I've taken my bows
And my curtain calls
You brought me fame and fortune and everything that goes with it. I thank you all

But it's been no bed of roses
No pleasure cruise. I consider it a challenge before the whole human race
And I ain't gonna lose

We are the champions, my friends
And we'll keep on fighting 'til the end

---

**Flashdance... What A Feeling (Irene Cara)**

First when there's nothing
But a slow glowing dream
That your fear seems to hide
Deep inside your mind
All alone, I have cried
Silent tears full of pride
In a world made of steel
Made of stone
Well, I hear the music
Close my eyes, feel the rhythm.
Wrap around, take a hold of my heart
What a feeling
Being's believing
I can have it all
Now I'm dancing for my life
Take your passion
And make it happen
Pictures come alive
You can dance right through your life

---

**Imagine (John Lennon)**

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Lving for today

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion, too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace... You...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world... You...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one

---

**Lovely Day**
**Bill Withers**

When I wake up in the morning, love and the sunlight hurts my eyes
And something without warning, love bears heavy on my mind. Then I look at you and the world's alright with me. Just one look at you and I know it's gonna be a lovely day

When the day that lies ahead of me seems impossible to face. When someone else instead of me always seems to know the way. Then I look at you and the world's alright with me. Just one look at you
And I know it's gonna be
A lovely day.

When the day that lies ahead of me seems impossible to face. When someone else instead of me always seems to know the way Then I look at you and the world's alright with me. Just one look at you
And I know it's gonna be a lovely day

---

**What A Wonderful World (Louis Armstrong)**

I see trees of green, red roses too. I see them bloom for me and you and I think to myself what a wonderful world. I see skies of blue and clouds of white. The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night. And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces of people going by
I see friends shaking hands saying how do you do
But they're really saying I love you.
I hear baby's cry, and I watched them grow

They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.
Yes, I think to myself what a wonderful world.

**Let It Go (Idina Menzel)**

The snow glows white on the mountain tonight, not a footprint to be seen.
A kingdom of isolation and it looks like I'm the queen.
The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside.
Couldn't keep it in, Heaven knows I tried. Don't let them in, don't let them see.
Be the good girl you always have to be. Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know. Well, now they know. Let it go. Can't hold it back anymore. Let it go, let it go!
Turn away and slam the door. I don't care what they're going to say.
Let the storm rage on.
The cold never bothered me anyway. It's funny how some distance, makes everything seem small. And the fears that once controlled me, can't get to me at all
It's time to see what I can do, to test the limits and break through. No right, no wrong, no rules for me. I'm free! Let it go, let it go. I am one with the wind and sky.
Let it go, let it go. You'll never see me cry. Here I'll stand, and here I'll stay.
Let the storm rage on. My power flurries through the air into the ground.
My soul is spiraling in frozen fractals all around
And one thought crystallizes like an icy blast
I'm never going back; the past is in the past! Let it go, and I'll rise like the break of dawn. Let it go. That perfect girl is gone.
Here I stand, in the light of day.
Let the storm rage on! The cold never bothered me anyway.

---

**Rise (Eddie Vedder)**

Such is the way of the world
You can never know
Just where to put all your faith.
And how will it grow Gonna rise up burning black holes in dark memories
Gonna rise up turning mistakes into gold Such is the passage of time. Too fast to fold. Suddenly swallowed by signs. Low and behold. Gonna rise up, find my direction magnetically
Gonna rise up, throw down my ace in the hole.

---

**The World's Greatest**
**(R. Kelly)**

I am a mountain,
I am a tall tree, oh
I am a swift wind
Sweeping the country
I am a river, down in the valley. I am a vision
And I can see clearly if anybody asks you who I am, just stand up tall, look 'em in the face and say I'm that star up in the sky. I'm that mountain peak up high.
Hey I made it. I'm the world's greatest I'm that little bit of hope when my back's against the ropes I can feel it. I'm the world's greatest. I am a giant. I am an Eagle.
I am a lion down in the jungle I am a marching band
I am the people. I am a helping hand. I am a hero
If anybody asks you who I am, just stand up tall look 'em in the face and say
I'm that star up in the sky
I'm that mountain peak up high.
Hey I made it, hmm
I'm the world's greatest
In the ring of life, I'll reign in love. And the world will notice a king. When all is darkness, I'll shine a light
and the mirrors of success reflect in me
I'm that star up in the sky
I'm that mountain peak up high

---

**Happy**
**(Pharrell Williams)**

It might seem crazy what I'm about to say. Sunshine, she's here, you can take a break
I'm a hot air balloon, I could go to space with the air, like I don't care baby by the way
Because I'm happy
Clap along if you feel like a room without a roof
Because I'm happy
Clap along if you feel like happiness is the truth
Because I'm happy
Clap along if you know what happiness is to you
Because I'm happy
Clap along if you feel like that's what you wanna do
Here comes bad news talking this and that. Yeah, give me all you got, don't hold back
Yeah, well I should probably warn you I'll be just fine
Yeah, no offense to you don't

waste your time
Here's why

**I Believe I Can Fly (R. Kelly)**

I used to think that I could not go on and life was nothing but an awful song
But now I know the meaning of true love. I'm leaning on the everlasting arms. If I can see it, then I can do it. If I just believe it, there's nothing to it. I believe I can fly I believe I can touch the sky. I think about it every night and day
Spread my wings and fly away. I believe I can soar
I see me running through that open door. I believe I can fly.
See I was on the verge of breaking down
Sometimes silence can seem so loud. There are miracles in life I must achieve. But first I know it starts inside of me,

**A Beautiful Morning (The Rascals)**

It's a beautiful mornin', I think I'll go outside a while and just smile. Just take in some clean fresh air, boy! Ain't no sense in stayin' inside. If the weather's fine, and you got the time. It's your chance to wake up and plan another brand new day. Either way
It's a beautiful mornin,' Each bird keeps singin' his own song. So long! I've got to be on my way now. Ain't no fun just hangin' around. I've got to cover ground; you couldn't keep me down. It just ain't no good if the sun shines. When you're still inside shouldn't hide, still inside, shouldn't hide There will be children with robins and flowers. Sunshine caresses each new waking hour seems to me that the people keep seeing more and more each day; gotta say, lead the way. It's okay, Wednesday, Thursday, it's okay. Monday, Wednesday, Friday, weekday

**Ain't No Stoppin' Us Now (McFadden & Whitehead)**

Ain't no stoppin' us now
We're on the move
Ain't no stoppin' us now
We've got the groove

There's been so many things
That's held us down
But now it looks like
Things are finally comin' around. I know we've got
A long, long way to go
And where we'll end up
I don't know. But we won't let nothin' hold us back
We're putting ourselves together. We're polishing up our act. If you've ever been held down before I know you refuse to be held down anymore.
Don't you let nothing stand in your way
I want y'all to listen to every word I say

**Celebration (Kool & The Gang)**

Celebration. This is your celebration. Celebrate good times, come on! Let's celebrate. Celebrate good times, come on!

There's a party goin' on right here, a celebration to last throughout the years
So bring your good times and your laughter too
We gonna celebrate your party with you

Come on now, celebration
Let's all celebrate and have a good time

**Beauty In The World (Macy Gray)**

I know you're fed up
But life don't let up for us
All they talk about is
What is going down?
Whats been messed up for us?
When I look around I see blue skies I see butterflies for us

Listen to the sound and lose it. It's sweet music and dance with me. There is beauty in the world. So much beauty in the world. Always beauty in the world. So much beauty in the world. Shake your booty boys and girls for the beauty in the world. Pick your diamond pick your pearl there is beauty in the world
All together now

We need more lovin'
We need more money, they say change is gonna come
Like the weather, they say forever. They say when they're in between notice the blue skies, notice the butterflies, notice me

Stop and smell the flowers
And lose it the sweet music and dance with me
There is beauty in the world
So much beauty in the world
Always beauty in the world
There is beauty in the world
Shake your booty boys and girls for the beauty in the world. Pick your diamond pick your pearl there is beauty in the world
All together now

Heya throw your hands up and holla. When you don't know what to do. Don't know if you'll make it through
Remember god is giving you beauty in the world. So love

Hey baby when I'm looking at you I know its fact is true
There is hope for love. There is beauty in the world. Hey baby when I'm looking at you
I know this vibe is true
There's love
There's hope for love
There's beauty in the world

**From a Distance**
**(Bette Midler)**
From a distance the world looks blue and green and the snow capped mountains white. From a distance
The ocean meets the stream
And the eagle takes to flight

From a distance there is harmony and it echoes through the land. Its the voice of hope. It's the voice of peace. It's the voice of every man. From a distance
we all have enough and no one is in need. And there are no guns, no bombs and no disease, no hungry mouths to feed. From a Distance we are instruments marching in a common band playing songs of hope, playing songs of peace. They are the songs of every man. God is watching us.

**Blowin' in the Wind**
**(Bob Dylan)**

How many roads must a man walk down Before you call him a man? How many seas must a white dove sail before she sleeps in the sand? Yes, and how many times must the cannon balls fly before they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind. The answer is blowin' in the wind

Yes, and how many years can a mountain exist before it's washed to the sea? Yes, and how many years can some people exist before they're allowed to be free? Yes, and how many times can a man turn his head and pretend that he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind
The answer is blowin' in the wind

Yes, and how many times must a man look up before he can see the sky? Yes, and how many ears must one man have before he can hear people cry? Yes, and how many deaths will it take 'till he knows that too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind

**I Choose Love**
**(Shawn Gallaway)**

I can see laughter, or I can see tears. I see a choice, love or fear? What do you choose?

I can see peace, or I can see war. I can see sunshine, or I can see a storm. What do you choose? Now I choose to live with freedom flying. From my heart, where the light keeps shining. I choose to feel the whole world crying for the strength that we can rise above. I choose Love

I can see sharing, or I can see greed. I can see caring, or poverty. What do you choose? I can see gardens, or I can see bombs. I can see life, or death coming on strong What do you choose?

Now I choose to live with freedom flying from my heart, where the light keeps shining. I choose to feel the whole world crying. I choose to feel one voice rising. I choose to feel us all united
In the strength that we can rise above. I choose Love

I see us healing, the darkness dying. I see us dawning, as one world united. So, what do you choose? Love or fear
Oh, we choose

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**With a Little Help From My Friends (The Beatles)**

What would you think if I sang out of tune? Would you stand up and walk out on me? Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song, And I'll try not to sing out of key.

I get by with a little help from my friends. I get high with a little help from my friends,
Going to try with a little help from my friends. What do I do when my love is away.

How do I feel by the end of the day? No, I get by with a little help from my friends.
Do you need anybody, I need somebody to love.
Could it be anybody? I want somebody to love. Would you believe in a love at first sight? Yes, I'm certain that it happens all the time.
What do you see when you turn out the light? I can't tell you, but I know it's mine.

Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends,

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**Return To Innocence**
**(Enigma)**

That's not the beginning of the end. That's the return to yourself. The return to innocence. Love - Devotion Feeling – Emotion, Love – Devotion, Feeling - Emotion
Don't be afraid to be weak
Don't be too proud to be strong, Just look into your heart my friend, That will be the return to yourself
The return to innocence
If you want, then start to laugh.
If you must, then start to cry. Be yourself don't hide.
Just believe in destiny. Don't care what people say. Just follow your own way. Don't give up and use the chance
to return to innocence. That's not the beginning of the end. That's the return to yourself

---

**You Gotta Be Good**
**(Des'ree)**

Listen as your day unfolds
Challenge what the future holds, Try and keep your head up to the sky, Lovers, they may 'cause you tears
Go ahead release your fears
Stand up and be counted
Don't be ashamed to cry

You gotta be bad, you gotta be bold, you gotta be wiser
You gotta be hard, you gotta be tough, you gotta be stronger.
You gotta be cool, you gotta be calm, you gotta stay together.
All I know love will save the day.
Herald what your mother said
Read the books your father read. Try to solve the puzzles in your own sweet time
Some may have more cash than you. Others take a different view. All I know, all I know, love will save the day. Time asks no questions, it goes on without you leaving you behind if you can't stand the pace. The world keeps on spinning. Can't stop it, if you tried to
This best part is danger staring you in the face

---

**Firework (Katy Perry)**

Do you ever feel like a plastic bag, drifting through the wind, wanting to start again? Do you ever feel so paper thin like a house of cards,
one blow from caving in?
Do you ever feel already buried deep? 6 feet under screams but no one seems to hear a thing?
Do you know that there's still a chance for you cause there's a spark in you

You just gotta ignite, the light, and let it shine
Just own the night like the 4th of July. 'Cause baby you're a firework. Come on, show 'em what you're worth.
Make 'em go "Oh, oh, oh"
As you shoot across the sky-y-y

Baby, you're a firework
Come on, let your colors burst.
Make 'em go "Oh, oh, oh,
"you're gonna leave 'em all in awe, awe, awe

You don't have to feel like a waste of space. You're original, cannot be replaced
If you only knew what the future holds. After a hurricane comes a rainbow

Maybe you're reason why all the doors are closed. So, you could open one that leads you to the perfect road
Like a lightning bolt, your heart will glow and when it's time, you'll know

**If you Believe (Charlie Smalls)**

If you believe within your heart you'll know that no one can change the path that you must go. Believe what you feel and know you're right, because the time will come around when you say it's yours. Believe there's a reason to be. Believe you can make time stand still.
You know from the moment you try, if you believe, I know you will. Believe in yourself, right from the start. You'll have brains. You'll have a heart
You'll have courage to last your whole life through
If you believe in yourself
As I believe in you

**What's Going On (Marvin Gaye)**

Mother, mother there's too many of you crying. Brother, brother, brother there's far too many of you dying. You know we've got to find a way
To bring some lovin' here today. Father, father we don't need to escalate. You see, war is not the answer for only love can conquer hate. You know we've got to find a way to bring some lovin' here today. Picket lines and picket signs. Don't punish me with brutality. Talk to me, so you can see Oh, what's going on
What's going on? In the meantime. Mother, mother, everybody thinks we're wrong. Oh, but who are they to judge us simply because our hair is long. Oh, you know we've got to find a way
To bring some understanding here today

**Oceans (Where Feet May Fail) (Hillsong United)**

You call me out upon the waters. The great unknown where feet may fail. And there I find You in the mystery. In oceans deep my faith will stand. And I will call upon Your name. And keep my eyes above the waves
When oceans rise my soul will rest in Your embrace for I am Yours and You are mine.

Your grace abounds in deepest waters. Your sovereign hand will be my guide. Where feet may fail and fear surrounds me You've never failed and You won't start now

So I will call upon Your name
And keep my eyes above the waves. When oceans rise
My soul will rest in Your embrace
For I am Yours and You are mine. Spirit lead me where my trust is without borders
Let me walk upon the waters
Wherever You would call me
Take me deeper than my feet could ever wander. And my faith will be made stronger
in the presence of my Savior

**Fly (Ricky Minaj)**

I came to win, to fight, to conquer, to thrive

I came to win, to survive, to prosper, to rise
To fly

I wish today it will rain all day
Maybe that will kinda make the pain go away
Trying to forgive you for abandoning me
Praying but I think I'm still an angel away
Angel away, yeah strange in a way
Maybe that is why I chase strangers away
They got their guns out aiming at me
But I become Neo when they aiming at me against them
Me against enemies, me against friends. Somehow they both seem to become one
A sea full of sharks and they all smell blood
They start coming and I start rising
Must be surprising, I'm just surmising
I win, thrive, soar, higher, higher, higher, more fire

---

**I See God in You**
**(Josh Wilson)**

Lily Grace lives next door,
The ripe young age of ninety-four, I see her in her garden every day, still sings at
the Sunday choir. Reads up King James line by line,
And tells me "Son, Jesus is the way." Her husband passed in '85, but she still keeps their love alive. Kisses his photograph every night,
Says "I'll see you soon."

Lily Grace, I see God in you.
I met him right before a show,
His mom said, "This is Gabriel. The doctors say he shouldn't be alive."
Some may call him special needs, but Jesus calls him royalty. Just look and you'll see heaven in his eyes.
He was quiet as the dawn,
'Til I started my first song.
He clapped his hands and danced all night long,
Like there was nothing wrong.
Gabriel, I see God in you.
Are you weary, are you weak,
Filled with insecurities?
Believe me, you are not the only one. I get scared to look inside myself, I know that darkness oh so well,
I sometimes wonder if I'm too far gone.
But even in my doubts I'll choose, to hold on to this truth that God is making broken things brand new,
Even me and you.

---

**He Said (Group 1 Crew)**

So, your life feels like it don't make sense and you think to yourself, 'I'm a good person'
So why do these things keep happening? Why you gotta deal with them?

You may be knocked down now but don't forget what He said, I won't give you more than you can take
And I might let you bend, but I won't let you break
And No I'll never ever let you go. Don't you forget what He said

Who you are ain't what you're going through so don't let it get the best of you cause God knows everything you need,
So you ain't gotta worry

You may be knocked down now but just believe what He said,
He said

Don't fear when you go through the fire. Hang on when it's down to the wire
Stand tall and remember

---

**Sinking Deep (Hillsong)**

Standing here in Your presence in a grace so relentless. I am won by perfect love wrapped within the arms of heaven in a peace that lasts forever
Sinking deep in mercy's sea

I'm wide awake. Drawing close stirred by grace
And all my heart is Yours
All fear removed I breathe You in. I lean into Your love
When I'm lost You pursue me
Lift my head to see Your glory.
Lord of all. So beautiful

Here in You I find shelter
Captivated by the splendor
Of Your face. My secret place

I'm wide awake drawing close.
Stirred by grace
And all my heart is Yours
All fear removed. I breathe You in. I lean into Your love

Your love so deep is washing over me. Your face is all I seek.
You are my everything.
Jesus Christ You are my one desire. Lord hear my only cry
To know You all my life.

---

**Titanium (David Guetta)**

You shout it out but I can't hear a word you say
I'm talking loud not saying much. I'm criticized but all your bullets ricochet
You shoot me down, but I get up. I'm bulletproof nothing to lose. Fire away,
Ricochet, you take your aim
Fire away, you shoot me down but I won't fall, I am titanium.
You shoot me down but I won't fall. I am titanium

Cut me down but it's you who has further to fall
Ghost town, haunted love
Raise your voice, sticks and stones may break my bones

---

**Scars To Your Beautiful (Alessia Cara)**

She just wants to be beautiful
She goes unnoticed, she knows no limits,
She craves attention, she praises an image,
She prays to be sculpted by the sculptor
Oh she don't see the light that's shining
Deeper than the eyes can find it
Maybe we have made her blind
So she tries to cover up her pain, and cut her woes away
'Cause cover girls don't cry after their face is made

But there's a hope that's waiting for you in the dark
You should know you're beautiful just the way you are
And you don't have to change a thing
The world could change its heart. No scars to your beautiful, we're stars and we're beautiful. And you don't have to change a thing
The world could change its heart. No scars to your beautiful, we're stars and we're beautiful

She has dreams to be an envy, so she's starving
You know, "Covergirls eat nothing." She says, "Beauty is pain and there's beauty in everything." "What's a little bit of hunger?" "I could go a little while longer," she fades away.
She don't see her perfect, she don't understand she's worth it
Or that beauty goes deeper than the surface. So to all the girls that's hurting, let me be your mirror, help you see a little bit clearer the light that shines within

---

**I Wish You Well (Mariah Carey)**

This goes out to you and you and you who you are

When glory days turn to stormy nights. You must have been so petrified. Didn't you, didn't you feel so cold
You against the world in a losing fight (a losing fight)
Captive of your demons inside.
So you sought an enemy. Like times before to mock ignorantly. Take heed to the word it's time
Check Proverbs 19:29
Don't cry. I wish you well
I truly wanted solidarity
Still wearing my blinders back then. I weep for what I dreamed we all could be
I'll keep you in prayer 'till the end. Still bruised, still walk on eggshells. Same frightened child, hide to protect myself
But you can't manipulate me like before
Examine first John chapter four verse four. And I wish you well.
Be strong in the Lord and power of His might

If my shows of gratitude are minuscule inside your mind, sorry. I love you and did all that I could Maybe when you're cursing me you don't feel so incomplete
But we've all made mistakes
Felt the guilt and self-hate

I know you've been there for me plenty. Maybe still got love for me. But let him without sin cast the first stone brethren. But who remains standing then not you. I see Philippians 4:9. So I wish you well. No weapon formed against me shall prosper. Surely God is my salvation I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord is my salvation. I will trust in Him. Yes, I know that I know that I know that I know but I have had God's help to this very day and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. So the more you curse me, the more you're blessing me, the Word said it, Love your enemies. Do good to those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you
Psalms 129:2. They have greatly oppressed me from my youth but they have not gained victory over me. I wish you well. He that

keeps his mind stayed on the Lord
He will keep them in perfect peace

**I Wish You Well (Bill Withers)**

I wish you flowers sunshine and smiles**.** I wish you children that grow to make you proud I wish you pretty things to wear**.** Sweet things to smell. I wish you well that always treat you fair
Wanna wish you ribbons to tie around your hair
I wish you truckloads of cheer and many happy years

Wanna wish you freedom to do the things you love**.** I wish you blessings and kindness from above**, w**anna wish you sunlight through the clouds
And I hope you laugh out loud

**To Be Beautiful**
**(Blaire Reinhard)**

So, this is me. This is you
up close and true. Let's all be so bright and new. Oh, how good it feels to be beautiful!
How wonderful it feels to be beautiful. Say hello to your reflection. See yourself, your true perfection. Oh, you'll know just who you are
You're meant to be. Oh, how good it feels to be beautiful!
How wonderful it feels to be beautiful. So, this is me, this is you. And everything we do feels just the way it's supposed to.
Sometimes you gotta be still before you can get ahead. Be still, ask the universe for help be real. You can't do it all by yourself.

**Slow Down (India Arie)**

So far from where I started out.
So far from where I want to be.
Listening for answers in the wind, but can't find a rock to plant my feet.
Looking for love in all the wrong places. Down on my knees and now I'm praying for patience. I know there's gotta be a better way. In the back of my mind I hear my momma say, slow down baby, you going too fast.
You got your hands in the air with your Feet on the gas. You 'bout to wreck your future, run from your past. You need to slow down before you go down baby.

Thinking the faster that I go the faster that I will reach my goal.
The race is not given to the swift but to the one who endureth. I thought that all of my obstacles were behind me. Walking around like I'm made out of diamond.
I tripped and fell and it reminded me to move over and let the angels guide me.

**Before I Tell Them**
**(Yolanda Adams)**

Before I Tell Them, Lord, please tell me. Before I serve them, Lord, please serve me

How can I lead where I've not been. How can I show if I don't know. Before I tell them, Lord, please tell me

Before I teach them, Lord, please teach me. Before I reach out to them, Lord, reach out to me. How can I lead where I've not been.
How can I show if I don't know. Before I tell them, Lord, please tell me
Before I tell them my way, sit me down and make me silent and give it to me your way
Please don't let the things I do distract me from hearing a word from you
Before I Tell Them, Lord, please tell me. Before I serve them, Lord, please serve me
How can I lead where I've not been. How can I show if I don't know. Before I tell them, Lord, please tell me Teach me, show me, reach out to me, Tell me

---

**"Alive" – P.O.D.**

Everyday is a new day
I'm thankful for every breath I take. I won't take it for granted. So I learn from my mistakes. It's beyond my control, sometimes it's best to let go. Whatever happens in this lifetime. So I trust in love. You have given me peace of mind. I feel so alive for the very first time I can't deny you. I feel so alive
I feel so alive for the very first time . And I think I can fly

---

**Optimistic (Sound of Blackness)**

When in the midst of sorrow
You can't see up when looking down. A brighter day tomorrow will bring You hear the voice of reason
Telling you this can't never be done. No matter how hard reality seems. Just hold on to your dreams.Don't give up and don't give in although it seems you never win. You will always pass the test. As long as you keep your head to the sky
You can win as long as you keep your head to the sky

---

**Because You Loved Me (Celine Dion)**

You were my strength when I was weak. You were my voice when I couldn't speak. You were my eyes when I couldn't see. You saw the best there was in me. Lifted me up when I couldn't reach. You gave me faith 'coz you believed. I'm everything I am
Because you loved me

---

**Bring Me To Life (Evanescence)**

How can you see into my eyes like open doors?
Leading you down into my core where I've become so numb.
Without a soul my spirit's sleeping somewhere cold until you find it there and lead it back home
Wake me up inside. Call my name and save me from the dark. Bid my blood to run before I come undone
Save me from the nothing I've become

---

**I Choose Love**

**(Shawn Gallaway)**

I can see laughter, or I can see tears. I see a choice, love or fear. What do you choose? I can see peace, or I can see war. I can see sunshine, or I can see a storm. What do you choose?
Now I choose to live with freedom flying
From my heart, where the light keeps shining. I choose to feel the whole world crying. For the strength that we can rise above.
I choose Love

---

**Swing What You Got (Electro Swingster)**

"Having a Good Day"-Benj Heard: Featuring similar upbeat track. "I'm tickled pink cause things aren't going my way, cause that would be boring"
The song is about having a bad day and taking a positive spin on it.

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**Sunday Morning Jetpack (Big Sean)**

Thank you God for all my set backs cause he the reason I'm able to give back
This feel like my Sunday morning jetpack
Feel like I sent the prayers up and got blessed back, whoa
Feel like I sent the prayers up and got blessed back
This feel like my Sunday morning jetpack, yeah

This the feeling though that I been missing some days
This feel like I'm headed to paradise one way
This feel like the family dinners that we used to have on Sunday with Grandma in the kitchen making rum cake
Or this spread she used to do for Thanksgiving, man
This feels like the first time I heard Killa Cam
Pink Tim's, in the Lamb
Mixing it with Dilla and Headphones to the ceiling fan, Bucket hat like Gilligan, yeah.
Lately I've been talking to ghosts. Didn't learn faith in school but that's what I'm testing the most. You know I still rep you when you're gone though. I got a picture of us on the front lawn
With me, grandma and mom, that night I went off to prom
Wishin' you could see that Lysol Dijon and Parmesan
Funny thing about it you always act like you knew
You told me how you were feeling before it happened, before it do. And you taught me I'm a product of everything I go through
And you and grandma went broke so we would never get bruised. You the reason I ever touched my first Franklin
Fast forward, I'm in Kanye crib with Kirk Franklin
It reminded me how of we always used to dress up as a family. And go to Sunday service, and being in church, singin'. Ain't been to church in awhile. But it ain't just about how you just praise him in the building
It's about how you praisin' him while you out
You taught me to remember that when I get set back
Been through the worst times to get the best back
Wishin' for a time machine to jet back 'til my all time low and something throw me a jetpack and see you again, needless to say back when I dated Alisha, Simone Or any other girl who looked like Lisa Bonet. Who was jealous of me and Jhené Who you would always advise with me being away. You was right, but I had to learn for myself
I guess a time came for me to earn for myself. I hope that this is somewhat of a thank you for all your help
Hope the angels take care of you 'til I see you myself
Thank you God for all my set backs cause he the reason I'm able to give back
This feel like my Sunday morning jetpack
Feel like I sent the prayers up and got blessed back, whoa
Feel like I sent the prayers up and got blessed back
This feel like my Sunday morning jetpack
And mama said hit them with the inspiration
In times like these we need inspiration
Turn all your problems into inspiration
Elevation, inspiration
I said elevation, inspiration

---

**Old School (B. Reith)**

If I gotta work twice as hard then so be it But I'mma make this happen whether you believe it or not" " So tired of trying to please everyone, A million different opinions ,I'm just going to be myself whether they like it or not, I'm giving it all that I got" " See I'm a work in progress that is still not finished, I'm still not finished" So this song has a lot of great lyrics. I connect with that work hard to get stuff done and even if you gotta do twice the work if that's what you want you gotta do it. But just make sure you're doing it for yourself cause you'll be more satisfied that way.

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**I wanna get better (Bleachers)**

Hey, I hear the voice of a preacher from the back room
Calling my name and I follow just to find you. I trace the faith to a broken down television and put on the weather
And I've trained myself to give up on the past 'cause
I frozen time between hearses and caskets
Lost control when I panicked at the acid test

I wanna get better

While my friends were getting high and chasing girls down parkway lines
I was losing my mind 'cause the love, the love, the love, the love, the love
That I gave wasted on a nice face. In a blaze of fear I put a helmet on a helmet. Counting seconds through the night and got carried away. So now I'm standing on the overpass screaming at the cars,
Hey, I wanna get better!
I didn't know I was lonely 'til I saw your face. I wanna get better. I didn't know I was broken 'til I wanted to change. I wanna get better
I go up to my room and there's girls on the ceiling
Cut out their pictures and I chase that feeling of an eighteen year old who didn't know what loss was
Now I'm a stranger and I miss the days of a life. Still permanent, mourn the years before I got carried away
So now I'm staring at the interstate screaming at myself, hey, I wanna get better! 'cause I'm sleeping in the back of a taxi. I'm screaming from my bedroom window. Even if its gonna kill me. Woke up this morning early before my family
From this dream where she was trying to show me
How a life can move from the darkness. She said to get better.
So I put a bullet where I shoulda put a helmet
And I crash my car 'cause I wanna get carried away
That's why I'm standing on the overpass screaming at myself. I wanna get better!

---

**Cheshire Kitten (S.J. Tucker)**

"If I leave my grin behind, remind me /that we're all mad here /and it's okay. /Sun up, sun down the shadows hide me down in/Wonderland, Wonderland, nobody knows the way,/but if you find it in your dreams, you can/find it at your day job/somewhere south of Hell/Take the path to left or right with/just your gut to guide you/the story is not for anyone else to/tell. " This is an odd one. I kinda see the grin line as it being ok to not be ok from time to time. People will always expect these things from you, but they can't make you. You can figure a way to get your personal pleasure into your day life as well. The last part speaks to me as a writer that my stuff even the bad works are worth at least telling.

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**Below my Feet**
**Mumford and Sons**

You were cold as the blood through your bones. And the light which led us from our chosen homes. Well I was lost.
And now I sleep the hours and that I can't weep
When all I knew was steeped in blackened holes I was lost
Keep the earth below my feet for all my sweat, my blood runs weak
Let me learn from where I have been. Keep my eyes to serve and my hands to learn
Keep my eyes to serve and my hands to learn
And I was still under your spell when I was told by Jesus all was well
So all must be well
Just give me time you know your desires and mine
Wrap my flesh in ivy and in twine for I must be well

---

**Marchin' On (OneRepublic)**

For those days we felt like a mistake. Those times when love's what you hate. Somehow we keep marchin' on. For those nights when I couldn't be there, I've made it harder to know that you know that somehow
We'll keep movin' on

There's so many wars we fought. There's so many things we're not. But with what we have I promise you that we're marchin' on
For all of the plans we made
There isn't a flag I'd wave
Don't care where we've been
I'd sink us to swim we're marchin' on. For those doubts that swirl all around us, for those lives that tear at the seams, we know
we're not what we've seen. For this dance we move with each other. There ain't no other step than one foot right in front of the other. We'll have the days we break and we'll have the scars to prove it. We'll have the bombs that we saved. But we'll have the heart not to lose it

---

**Rich Kids**
**Judah & the Lion**

Spend your life trying to make all your money
Your accounts are full but all you've found is that your empty.
Ain't it funny how the simple things in life are the only things that really matter
Your life is complicated, found your dreams are overrated.
Now you're old and wanna go back. But you can't. We're rich but we don't got no money
We're just a bunch of kids
Spend your life running away from your family. Your old age now its all that your wanting.
Ain't it funny how the simple things in life are the only things that really matter, your life is complicated, found your dreams are overrated
Now you're old and wanna go back but you can't. We're rich but we don't got no money.
We're just a bunch of kids

---

**Hall of fame (The Script)**

Yeah, You could be the greatest. You can be the best
You can be the King Kong banging on your chest
You could beat the world
You could beat the war
You could talk to God, go banging on his door
You can throw your hands up
You can beat the clock
You can move a mountain
You can break rocks
You can be a master
Don't wait for luck
Dedicate yourself and you gon' find yourself
Standing in the hall of fame (yeah)
And the world's gonna know your name (yeah)
'Cause you burn with the brightest flame (yeah)
And the world's gonna know your name (yeah)
And you'll be on the walls of the hall of fame
You can go the distance
You can run the mile
You can walk straight through hell with a smile
You could be the hero
You could get the gold
Breaking all the records they thought, never could be broke
Do it for your people
Do it for your pride
How you ever gonna know if you never even try?
Do it for your country
Do it for your name
'Cause there's gonna be a day
When your, standing in the hall of fame (yeah)
And the world's gonna know your name (yeah)
'Cause you burn with the brightest flame (yeah)
And the world's gonna know your name (yeah)
And you'll be on the walls of the hall of fame
Be a champion, be a champion, be a champion, be a champion
On the walls of the hall of fame
Be students, be teachers
Be politicians, be preachers
Be believers, be leaders
Be astronauts, be champions
Be truth seekers
Be students, be teachers
Be politicians, be preachers
Be believers, be leaders
Be astronauts, be champions
Standing in the hall of fame (yeah, yeah, yeah)
And the world's gonna know your name (yeah, yeah, yeah)
'Cause you burn with the brightest flame (yeah, yeah, yeah)
And the world's gonna know your name (yeah, yeah, yeah)
And you'll be on the walls of the hall of fame
You could be the greatest
(You can be a champion)
You can be the best
(You can be a champion)
You can be the King Kong banging on your chest
(You can be a champion)
You could beat the world
(You can be a champion)
You could beat the war
(You can be a champion)
You could talk to God, go banging on his door
(You can be a champion)
You can throw your hands up
(You can be a champion)
You can beat the clock
(You can be a champion)
You can move a mountain
(You can be a champion)
You can break rocks
(You can be a champion)
You can be a master
(You can be a champion)
Don't wait for luck
(You can be a champion)
Dedicate yourself and you gon' find yourself
(You can be a champion)
Standing in the hall of fame
(You can be a champion)

---

**Just Breathe**
**Pearl Jam**

Yes I understand
That every life must end
As we sit alone
I know someday we must go
Yeah I'm a lucky man
To count on both hands

The ones I love
Some folks just have one
Yeah others they got none
Stay with me. Let's just breathe.
Practiced on our sins
Never gonna let me win
Under everything just another human being
I don't want to hurt
There's so much in this world
To make me believe. Stay with me. All I see Did I say that I need you? Did I say that I want you? What if I did and I'm a fool you see
No one knows this more than me cause I come clean
I wonder every day as I look upon your face
Everything you gave
And nothing you would take
Nothing you would take
Everything you gave
Did I say that I need you?
Did I say that I want you?
What if I did and I'm a fool you see. No one knows this more than me. I come clean
Nothing you would take
Everything you gave
Hold me 'till I die
Meet you on the other side

---

**Get Better**
**Frank Turner**

I got me a shovel
And I'm digging a ditch
And I'm going to fight for this four square feet of land like a mean old son of a bitch
I got me a future
I'm not stuck on the past
I got no new tricks, yeah I'm up on bricks but me
I'm a machine and I was built to last
I'm trying to get better because I haven't been my best
She took a plain black marker, started writing on my chest
She drew a line across the middle of my broken heart
And said, come on now, let's fix this mess
We could get better
Because we're not dead yet
They threw me a whirlwind
And I spat back the sea
I took a battering but I've got thicker skin and the best people
I know looking out for me
So I'm taking the high road
My engines running high and fine
May I always see the road rising up to meet me
And my enemies defeated in the mirror behind
I'm trying to get better because I haven't been my best
She took a plain black marker, started writing on my chest
She drew a line across the middle of my broken heart,
And said: "Come on now, let's fix this mess"
We could get better
Because we're not dead yet
It's just a knot in the small of your back
You could work it out with your fingers
It's just a tune that got stuck in your head
You could work it out with your fingers
It's just some numbers tangled up in your sums
You could work it out with your fingers
It's just a simple braille mission from the person you miss
A reminder you could always be
A little bit better than this
So try and get better and don't ever accept less
Take a plain black marker and write this on your chest
Draw a line underneath all of this unhappiness
Come on now, let's fix this mess
We could get better
Because we're not dead yet
We could get better
Because we're not dead yet

---

**Simple Man (Lynard Skynard)**

Mama told me when I was youn
"Come sit beside me, my only son and listen closely to what I say
And if you do this, it'll help you some sunny day"
"Be a simple man"
Oh, take your time, don't live too fast. Troubles will come and they will pass. You'll find a woman, yea, you'll find love and don't forget son, there is someone up above
And be a simple kind of man
Oh be something you love and understand
Baby be a simple kind of man
Oh, won't you do this for me son, if you can?
Forget your lust for the rich man's gold
All that you need is in your soul
And you can do this, oh baby, if you try
All that I want for you my son is to be satisfied
And be a simple kind of man
Oh be something you love and understand
Baby be a simple kind of man
Oh, won't you do this for me son if you can?
Boy, don't you worry, you'll find yourself

Follow your heart, lord, and nothing else
And you can do this, oh baby, if you try
All that I want for you my son is to be satisfied

---

**Your Song**
**Elton John**

It's a little bit funny, this feeling inside
I'm not one of those who can easily hide, I
Don't have much money but boy, if I did
I'd buy a big house where we both could live
If I was a sculptor but then again, no
Or a man who makes potions in a traveling show
Oh, I know it's not much but it's the best I can do
My gift is my song
And this one's for you
And you can tell everybody this is your song
It may be quite simple but now that it's done
I hope you don't mind
I hope you don't mind
That I put down in words
How wonderful life is while you're in the world
I sat on the roof and kicked up the moss
Well, a few of the verses, well, they've got me quite cross
But the sun's been quite kind
While I wrote this song
It's for people like you that
Keep it turned on
So excuse me forgetting
But these things, I do
You see, I've forgotten
If they're green or they're blue
Anyway, the thing is, what I really mean
Yours are the sweetest eyes I've ever seen
And you can tell everybody this is your song
It may be quite simple but
Now that it's done
I hope you don't mind
I hope you don't mind
That I put down in words
How wonderful life is while you're in the world
I hope you don't mind
I hope you don't mind
That I put down in words
How wonderful life is while you're in the world

---

**Car Radio**
**Twenty One Pilots**

I ponder of something great
My lungs will fill and then deflate
They fill with fire
Exhale desire
I know it's dire
My time today
I have these thoughts
So often I ought
To replace that slot
With what I once bought
'Cause somebody stole
My car radio
And now I just sit in silence
Sometimes quiet is violent
I find it hard to hide it
My pride is no longer inside
It's on my sleeve
My skin will scream
Reminding me of
Who I killed inside my dream
I hate this car that I'm driving
There's no hiding for me
I'm forced to deal with what I feel
There is no distraction to mask what is real
I could pull the steering wheel
I have these thoughts
So often I ought
To replace that slot
With what I once bought
'Cause somebody stole
My car radio
And now I just sit in silence
I ponder of something terrifying
'Cause this time there's no sound to hide behind
I find over the course of our human existence
One thing consists of consistence
And it's that we're all battling fear
Oh dear, I don't know if we know why we're here
Oh my,
Too deep
Please stop thinking
I liked it better when my car had sound
There are things we can do
But from the things that work there are only two
And from the two that we choose to do
Peace will win
And fear will lose
There's faith and there's sleep
We need to pick one please because
Faith is to be awake
And to be awake is for us to think
And for us to think is to be alive
And I will try with every rhyme
To come across like I am dying
To let you know you need to try to think
I have these thoughts
So often I ought
To replace that slot
With what I once bought
'Cause somebody stole
My car radio
And now I just sit in silence

I ponder of something great
My lungs will fill and then deflate
They fill with fire
Exhale desire
I know it's dire
My time today

I have these thoughts
So often I ought
To replace that slot
With what I once bought
'Cause somebody stole
My car radio
And now I just sit in silence

**Morrison (Frenship)**

Trouble's coming down again. We said, trouble's coming 'round the bend
I see 'em coming 'round the bend for me again
Riding for my soul across the creek. Oh yeah I hear the hounds call
Going back between my eyes. True grit lies inside my mind leaving awake in the moonlight and dust trees, I'm outta sight
I'm going back home
Only face I know is the face I see. Only place I know is inside of me. Home in me
And I hope the swamps they push me towards, almost won. I put my heels down and I steady my course
I push on 'cause there's so much noise. Gotta outrun what's chasing me
Going back between my eyes. True grit lies inside my mind leaving awake in the moonlight. Dust trees, I'm outta sight
Oh, oh, I gotta get home
Back to the valley and into my soul. Trouble's coming down again. We said, trouble's coming around the bend

**Homegrown (Zac Brown Band)**

I got a piece of land, out in the countryside
Lay back and smell the sun
Warm up the Georgia pine
Feels so good to be taking it easy
Why would I ever leave?
'Cause I know
I got some good friends that live down the street
Got a good looking woman with her arms 'round me
Here in a small town where it feels like home
I got everything I need and nothing that I don't
Homegrown, Homegrown
We got a fire going down by the riverside
Sip whiskey out the bottle
Livin' like we'll never die
Come on and stay a while if you don't believe me
Why would I ever leave?
'Cause I know
I got some good friends that live down the street
Got a good looking woman with her arms 'round me
Here in a small town where it feels like home
I got everything I need and nothing that I don't
Homegrown, Homegrown
I got some good friends that live down the street
Got a good looking woman with her arms 'round me
Here in a small town where it feels like home
I got everything I need
Homegrown
And nothing that I don't
Homegrown
Everything I need
Homegrown

And nothing that I don't
Homegrown

It's the weight that you carry
from the things you think you
want
It's the weight that you carry
from the things you think you
want
Weight you carry
It's the weight that you carry
from the things you think you
want
It's the weight that you carry
from the things you think you
want
I got everything I need, nothing
that I don't
Homegrown
Everything I need, nothing that I
don't
Homegrown
Everything I need, nothing that I
don't
Homegrown
Oh, everything I need and
nothing that I don't
Homegrown

**Good Enough (Instrumentality)**

Who do you call when your
dreams don't call back?
But being famous s'posed to
solve that. I had to walk when
they told me I'd crawl back.
How hard can you fall when you
never plan to fall back? A
dream differed dies and
shrivels. Every dream dies a
little. I lost my rainbow when my
skittles fell short
Chicken Little gave me my
weather report cause now the
sky is falling, tears are falling,
eyes are bawling
These dreams on my back, I
swear they weigh a ton
So I left them to dry up with
raisins in the sun, one

When me and Justin were in
our sophomore year of high
school, we were, um,
approached with a proposition
from one of the friends of Jay
Brown, who's a huge producer
at Roc-a-Fella and me and
Justin were completely excited,
got together all of our music,
sent it into him and, so excited,
he listened to the first two
tracks and said "We weren't
good enough." It stings when
you have in your head the idea,
the thought that you're inferior,
that your music or whatever you
put your heart into is not good
enough. We revolt against that
thought. This is a product of a
revolution
Wake up sweating, wetting my
forehead. Poor bed it just
witnessed torture. He's in the
bed right there waking up
made the difference between a
dream and a nightmare. He was
rocking the crowd of a million.
Now I'm staring at the ceiling
concealing the stars and now
I'm leaking at the eyes. Wishes
he could close them and the
dreams would reprise. Giving
up brings dreams demise.
When they leave there are no
good goodbyes. You're
standing where children cry,
where they scream why? You're
standing where dreams die
Don't be confused
Our love is true
You can tell by the way
I'm looking up
Maybe I'm just tired
Tired of never knowing.
Cause you know I'm not good
enough for you
Yo, What's the point of scouts?
They too make their talents
doubt their talent
Hit their lungs make them
breathe in without air
I'm trying to amount it, the
height of the highest mountain.
In bed with role model that
every Augie Farks out there.
Trying to make tracks sell by
making every sale by changing
up the style
And repressing the swelter
But it's depressing to sell knives
to a country that's been
backstabbed
And peel back scabs and
ransack. I guess I'll just be good
enough. I know I'm not good
enough for you

**Skin (Sixx A.M.)**

Paint yourself a picture
Of what you wish you looked
like. Maybe then they just might
feel an ounce of your pain.
Come into focus. Step out of
the shadows. It's a losing battle.
There's no need to be
ashamed. 'Cause they don't
even know you
All they see is scars
They don't see the angel
Living in your heart
Let them find the real you
Buried deep within
Let them know with all you've
got, that you are not your skin.
And when they start to judge
you show them your true colors
and do on to others as you'd
have done to you. Just rise
above this, kill them with your
kindness. Ignorance is blinded.
They're the ones that stand to

lose. Cause they don't even know you.

**It's Time (Imagine Dragons)**

So, this is what you meant
When you said that you were spent. And now it's time to build from the bottom of the pit, right to the top. Don't hold back. Packing my bags and giving the Academy a rain check**.** I don't ever want to let you down. I don't ever want to leave this town
Cause after all this city never sleeps at night**.** It's time to begin, isn't it? I get a little bit bigger but then I'll admit
I'm just the same as I was
Now don't you understand
I'm never changing who I am
So this is where you fell
And I am left to sell
The path to heaven runs through miles of clouded hell right to the top
Don't look back
Turning to rags and giving the commodities a rain check I don't ever want to let you down. I don't ever want to leave this town

**Human (Christina Perri)**

I can hold my breath
I can bite my tongue
I can stay awake for days
If that's what you want
Be your number one
I can fake a smile
I can force a laugh
I can dance and play the part
If that's what you ask
Give you all I am I can do it
But I'm only human and I bleed when I fall down
I'm only human and I crash and I break down. Your words in my head, knives in my heart. You build me up and then I fall apart cause I'm only human. I can turn it on
be a good machine. I can hold the weight of worlds
I f that's what you need,
Be your everything
I'm only human. I can take so much until I've had enough

**ORDINARY PEOPLE (Danniebelle Hall)**

Just ordinary people, God uses ordinary people. He chooses people just like me and you who are willing to do as He commands. God uses people that will give Him all no matter how small your all may seem to you.
Because little becomes much as you place it in the Master's hand
Just like that little lad who gave Jesus all he had. How the multitude was fed with the fish and the loaves of bread. What you have may not seem much but when you yield it to the touch of the Master's loving hand, then you will understand how your life could never be the same

**Save The Hero (James Scheffer / Beyonce Knowles / Richard Preston Butler / Ali Tamposi)**

I lay alone awake at night
Sorrow fills my eyes
But I'm not strong enough to cry
Despite of my disguise
I'm left with no shoulder
But everybody wants to lean on me
I guess I'm their soldier
But who's gonna be mine?
Who's there to save the hero
When she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help?
Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl
After she saves the world?

I bottle all my hurt inside
I guess I'm living a lie
Inside my mind each day I die
What can bring me back to life?
A simple word, a gesture
Someone to say you're beautiful
Come find this buried treasure
Rainbows lead to a pot of gold

Who's there to save the hero
When she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help?
Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl
After she saves the world

I've given too much of myself and now it's driving me crazy
(I'm crying out for help)
Sometimes I wish someone would just come here and save me
Save me from myself

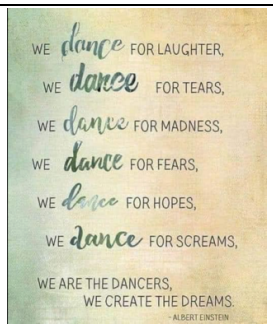
Who's there to save the hero
When she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help?
Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl
After she saves the world

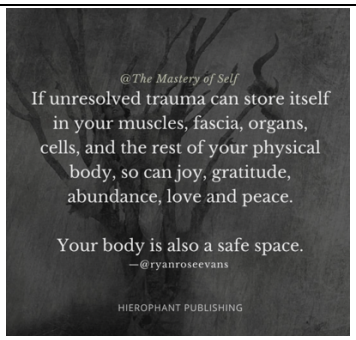
The Watering Place

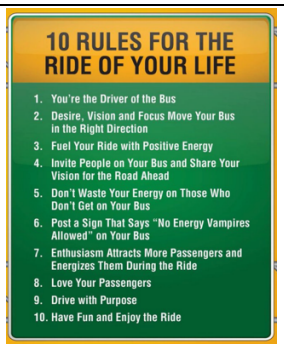
WORSHIP • ACTIVATION • TRANSFORMATION • ENCOUNTER • RESTORATION

## WATERING SESSIONS

# MEMES


WE dance FOR LAUGHTER,
WE dance FOR TEARS,
WE dance FOR MADNESS,
WE dance FOR FEARS,
WE dance FOR HOPES,
WE dance FOR SCREAMS,
WE ARE THE DANCERS,
WE CREATE THE DREAMS.
~ALBERT EINSTEIN

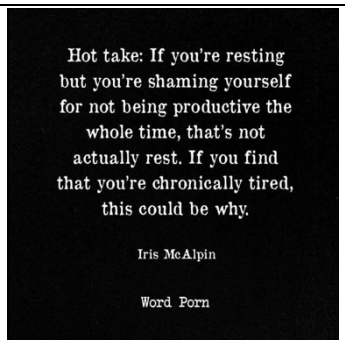

@The Mastery of Self
If unresolved trauma can store itself in your muscles, fascia, organs, cells, and the rest of your physical body, so can joy, gratitude, abundance, love and peace.
Your body is also a safe space.
—@ryanroseevans
HIEROPHANT PUBLISHING

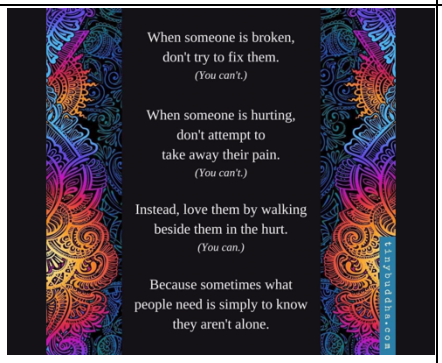

10 RULES FOR THE RIDE OF YOUR LIFE
1. You're the Driver of the Bus
2. Desire, Vision and Focus Move Your Bus in the Right Direction
3. Fuel Your Ride with Positive Energy
4. Invite People on Your Bus and Share Your Vision for the Road Ahead
5. Don't Waste Your Energy on Those Who Don't Get on Your Bus
6. Post a Sign That Says "No Energy Vampires Allowed" on Your Bus
7. Enthusiasm Attracts More Passengers and Energizes Them During the Ride
8. Love Your Passengers
9. Drive with Purpose
10. Have Fun and Enjoy the Ride

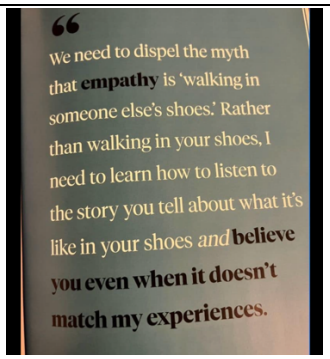
YOU CAN DO ANYTHING BUT NOT EVERYTHING.
David Allen

SOMETIMES I WISH I HAD THE POWER TO FREEZE TIME
JUST SO I COULD SLEEP FOR DAYS

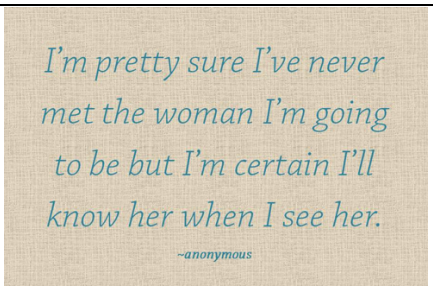
THINGS I'M UNLEARNING
@ReachOutRecovery
Societal standards of beauty & diet culture
Seeking external validation over self assurance
Distracting from hard feelings instead of processing them
Making myself smaller to fit into social situations
Pretending like I'm fine instead of asking for support
Ignoring my own boundaries to please other people
Believing my self worth depends on my productivity
Sacrificing my voice/beliefs to avoid conflict
Not celebrating my accomplishments because "others have better ones"


Hot take: If you're resting but you're shaming yourself for not being productive the whole time, that's not actually rest. If you find that you're chronically tired, this could be why.
Iris McAlpin
Word Porn

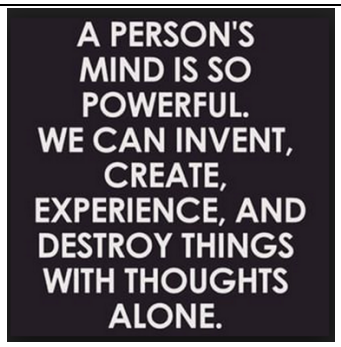

When someone is broken, don't try to fix them.
(You can't.)
When someone is hurting, don't attempt to take away their pain.
(You can't.)
Instead, love them by walking beside them in the hurt.
(You can.)
Because sometimes what people need is simply to know they aren't alone.

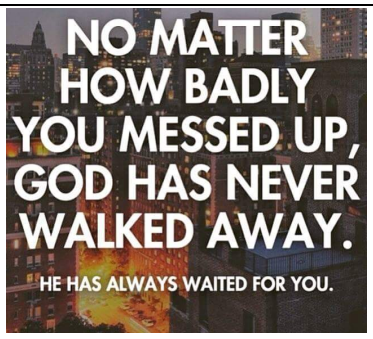

We need to dispel the myth that empathy is 'walking in someone else's shoes.' Rather than walking in your shoes, I need to learn how to listen to the story you tell about what it's like in your shoes and believe you even when it doesn't match my experiences.

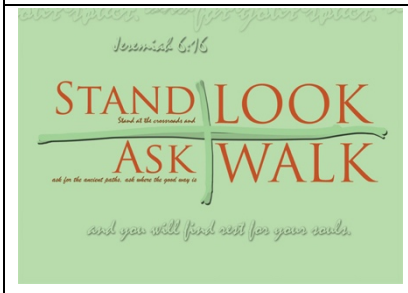
GRIEF ISN'T JUST FOR DEATH
it's also for
FRIENDSHIPS THAT HAVE ENDED 1
LOSING YOUR COMMUNITY 2
MISSING THE CERTAINTY YOU ONCE HAD 3
QUESTIONING YOUR JUDGMENT 4
RELEASING WHO YOU ONCE WERE 5
FEELING LOST AND UNANCHORED 6
LOSING TRADITIONS YOU LOVED 7

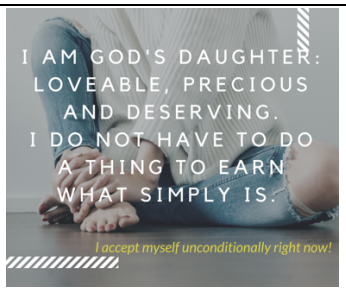

I'm pretty sure I've never met the woman I'm going to be but I'm certain I'll know her when I see her.
~anonymous

WHEN I THINK ABOUT MY TO-DO LIST



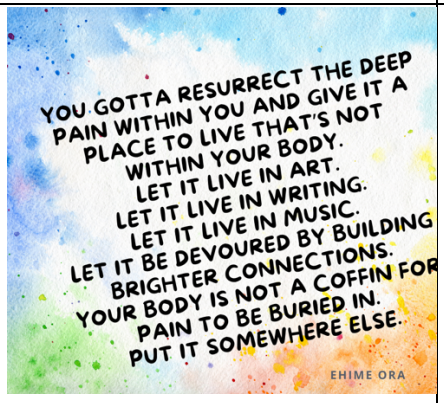





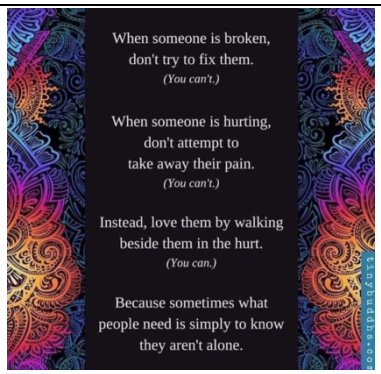


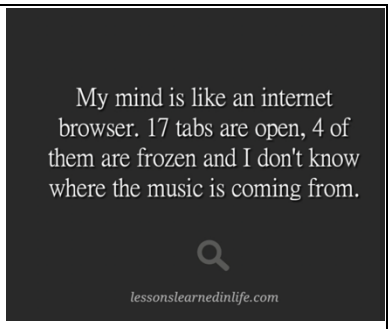

"There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief... and unspeakable love."

- Washington Irving

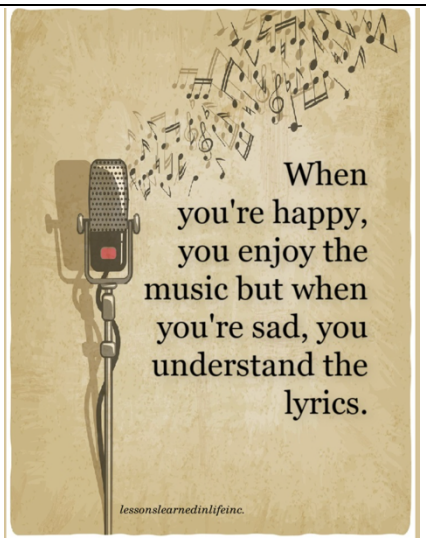


You can't reach
for anything new if your
hands are still full of
yesterday's junk
Regret
Hurt
Guilt
Fear
Anger


When someone is broken,
don't try to fix them.
(You can't.)
When someone is hurting,
don't attempt to
take away their pain.
(You can't.)
Instead, love them by walking
beside them in the hurt.
(You can.)
Because sometimes what
people need is simply to know
they aren't alone.


My mind is like an internet
browser. 17 tabs are open, 4 of
them are frozen and I don't know
where the music is coming from.
lessonslearnedinlife.com

The older I get,
the more I appreciate
being home, doing
absolutely nothing.

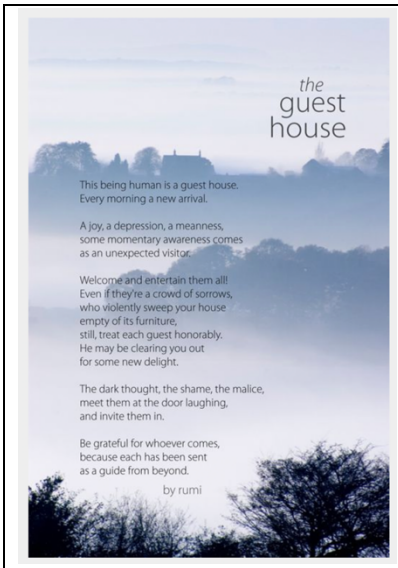

When
you're happy,
you enjoy the
music but when
you're sad, you
understand the
lyrics.
lessonslearnedinlifeinc.

The Breath Prayer
Written by Sheridan Voysey
Lord God, fill me with your Holy Spirit
I receive your love & release my insecurity
I receive your joy & release my unhappiness
I receive your peace & release my anxiety
I receive your patience & release my impulsiveness
I receive your kindness & release my indifference
I receive your goodness & release my ungodliness
I receive your faithfulness & release my disloyalty
I receive your gentleness & release my severity
I receive your self-control & release my self-indulgence
Artwork by @jodiew888

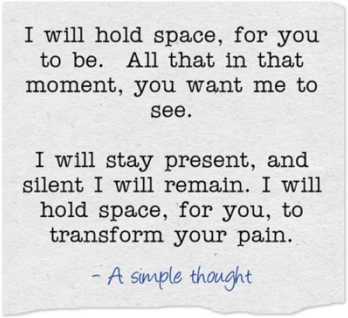
Staying positive doesn't mean
you have to be happy all of the
time. It means that even on hard
days you know that there are
better ones coming.
lessonslearnedinlife.com

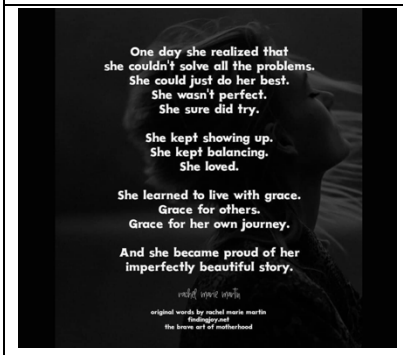
Never regret a day in
your life: good days give
happiness, bad days give
experience, worst days
give lessons, and best
days give memories.

I even overthink
my overthinking.
lessonslearnedinlife.com


the guest house
This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.
A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.
Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.
The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.
Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.
by rumi

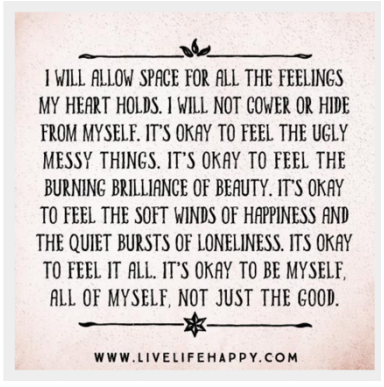
Holding space
Holding space
Is a courageous act
Of compassion and mindfulness
Witnessing
Without judgment
Or criticisms
Simply being
Connected
With the distress
Or happiness
Whatever is coming to the surface
And needs to be
Shared
Acknowledged
Celebrated
Or released
Marzena Skowronska


I will hold space, for you to be. All that in that moment, you want me to see.
I will stay present, and silent I will remain. I will hold space, for you, to transform your pain.
- A simple thought

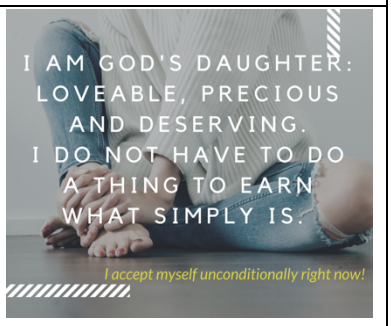

One day she realized that
she couldn't solve all the problems.
She could just do her best.
She wasn't perfect.
She sure did try.
She kept showing up.
She kept balancing.
She loved.
She learned to live with grace.
Grace for others.
Grace for her own journey.
And she became proud of her
imperfectly beautiful story.
original words by rachel marie martin
findingjoy.net
the brave art of motherhood

No matter how broken you are,
you will always find a way to rebuild yourself.

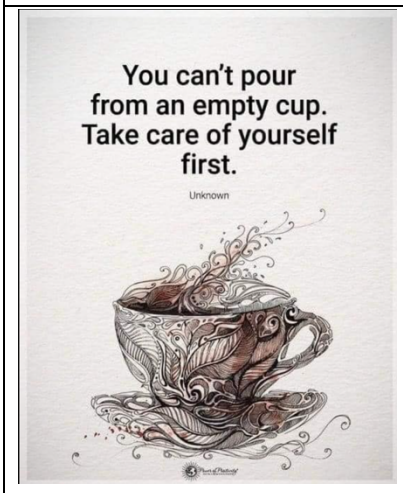
Leaping buildings, stopping bullets?
Exhausting

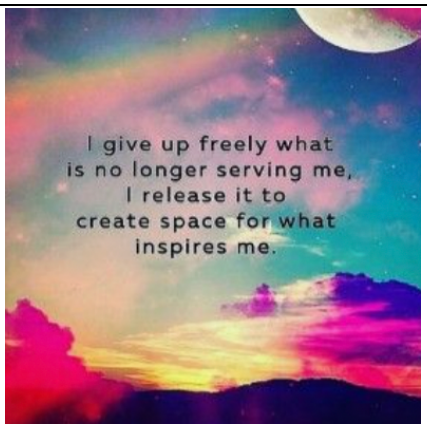

I WILL ALLOW SPACE FOR ALL THE FEELINGS MY HEART HOLDS. I WILL NOT COWER OR HIDE FROM MYSELF. IT'S OKAY TO FEEL THE UGLY MESSY THINGS. IT'S OKAY TO FEEL THE BURNING BRILLIANCE OF BEAUTY. IT'S OKAY TO FEEL THE SOFT WINDS OF HAPPINESS AND THE QUIET BURSTS OF LONELINESS. ITS OKAY TO FEEL IT ALL. IT'S OKAY TO BE MYSELF, ALL OF MYSELF, NOT JUST THE GOOD.
WWW.LIVELIFEHAPPY.COM

NEW BEGINNINGS ARE OFTEN DISGUISED AS PAINFUL ENDINGS.
LAO TZU

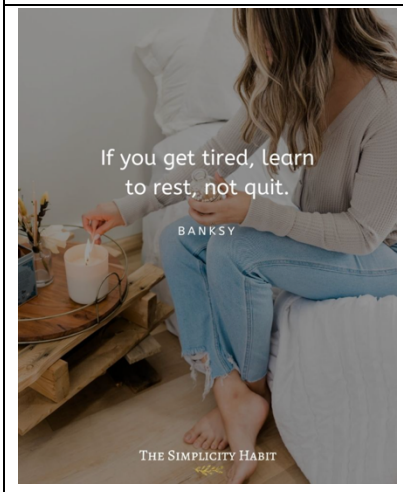

I AM GOD'S DAUGHTER: LOVEABLE, PRECIOUS AND DESERVING. I DO NOT HAVE TO DO A THING TO EARN WHAT SIMPLY IS.
I accept myself unconditionally right now!

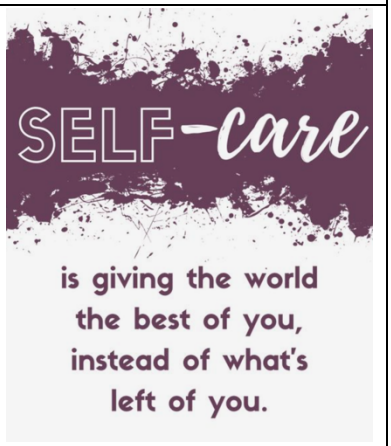
I sat with my
anger long enough,
until she
told me her
real name
was grief.




CALM
is a super power






Additional Memes are located on Pinterest at
https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/the-watering-place/

The Watering Place

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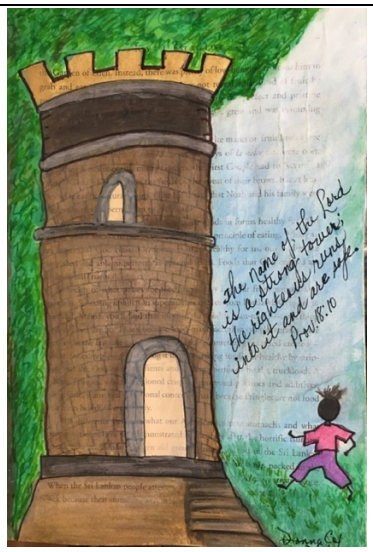
## WATERING SESSIONS

# PAINTINGS

## These are all original paintings created by Rev. Dr. Donna M. Cox




The Name of the Lord

Proverbs 31

Beautiful In Brokenness

Beautiful Feet

Come Out of Hiding

Come Deeper

Lie Down in Peace

A Quiet Place

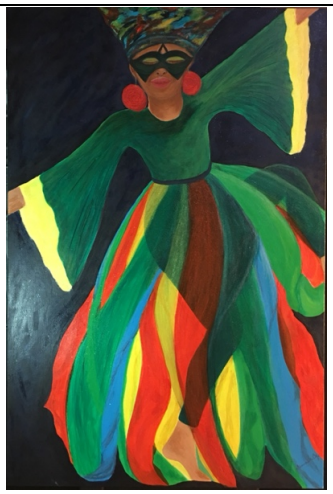
Nature

Joyful Grace

The Lioness

Let It Go

Dancing Day



Dancing In The Dark

Friends

Radiant Joy

Sisters, Friends

Power Position

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## WATERING SESSIONS

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Many resources for Spiritual Practices
are located on Pinterest at

**https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/the-watering-place/**
**https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/spirit-growth/**
**https://www.pinterest.com/revdonc/ministry-resources/**

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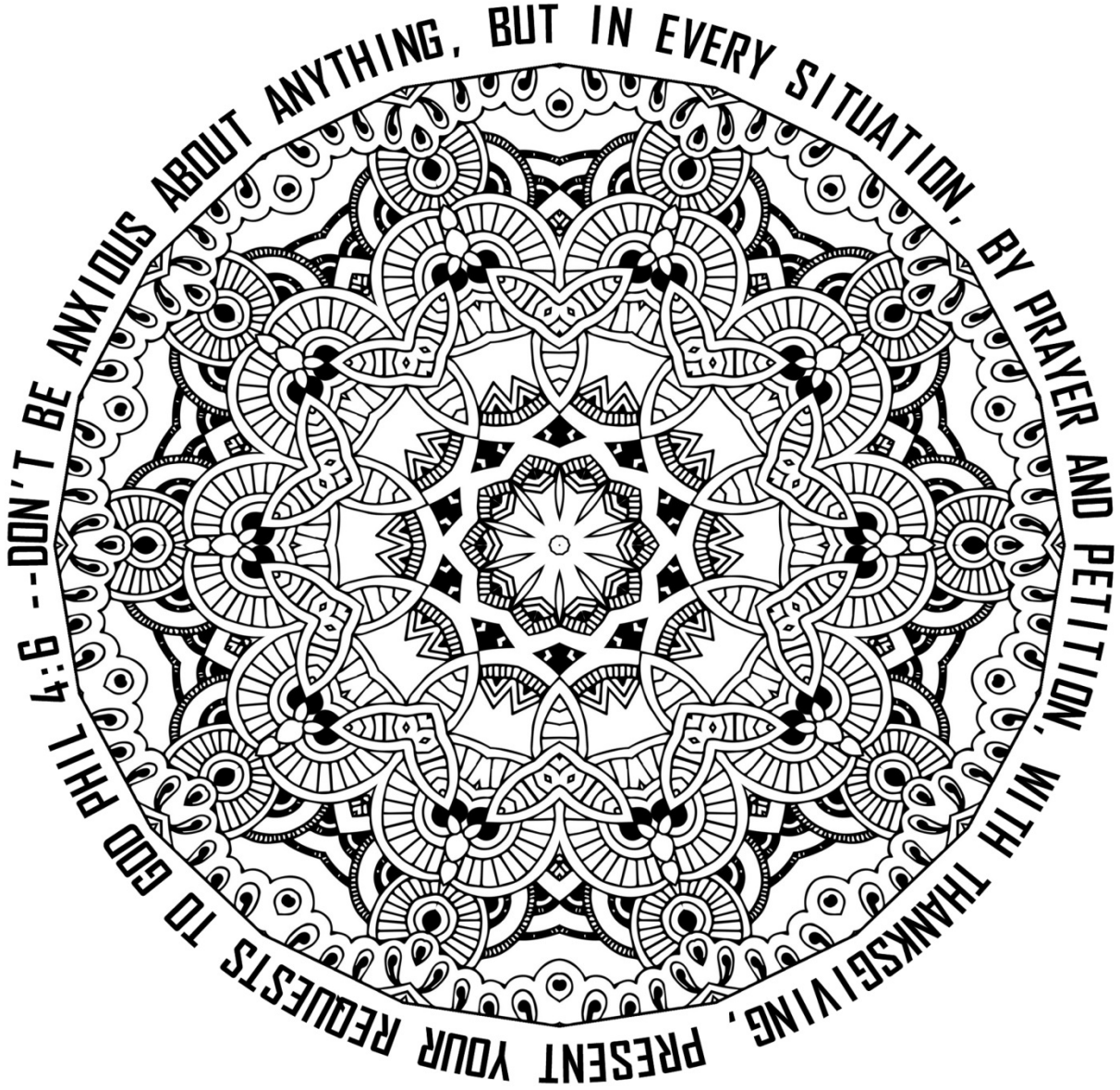
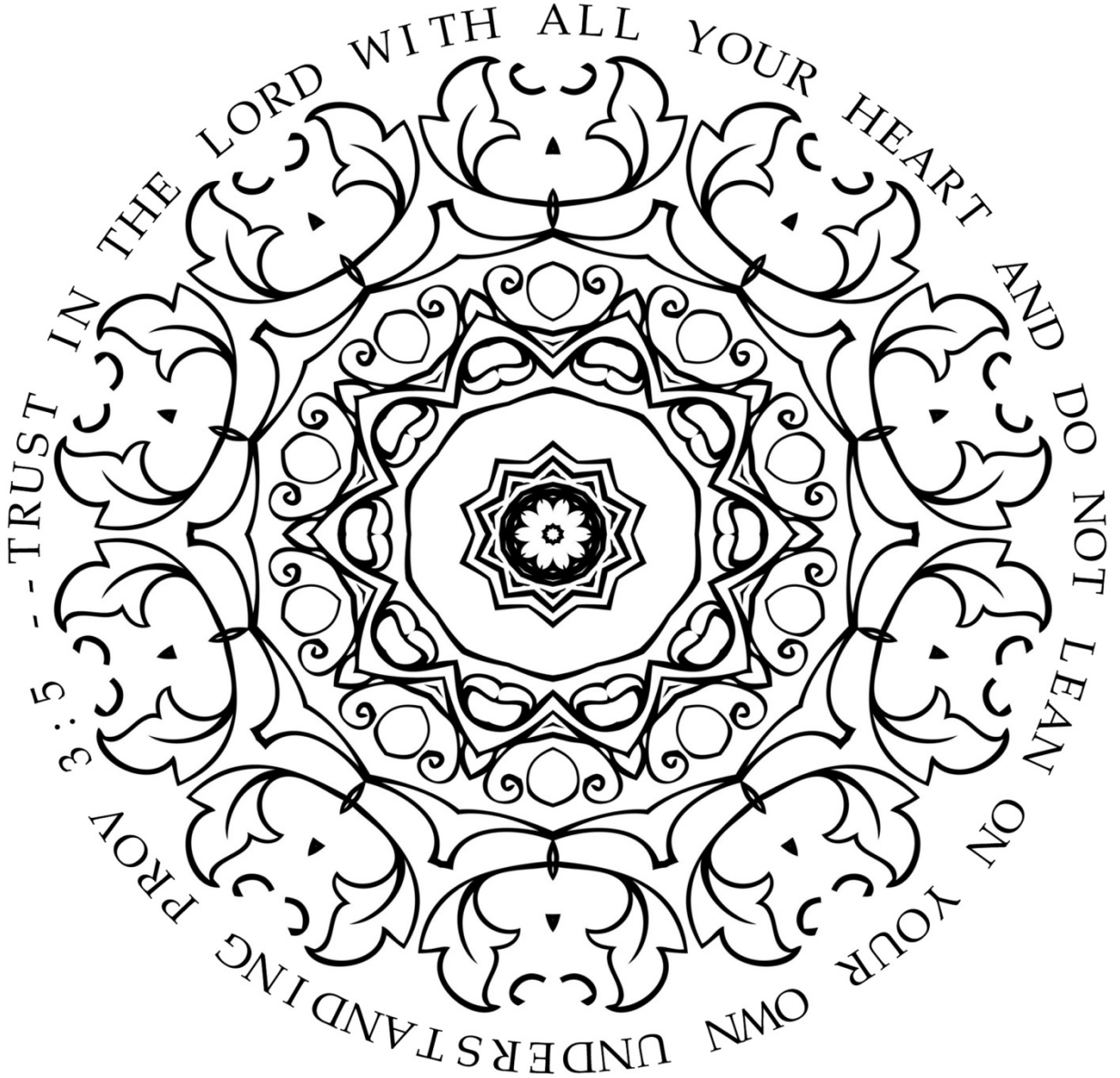
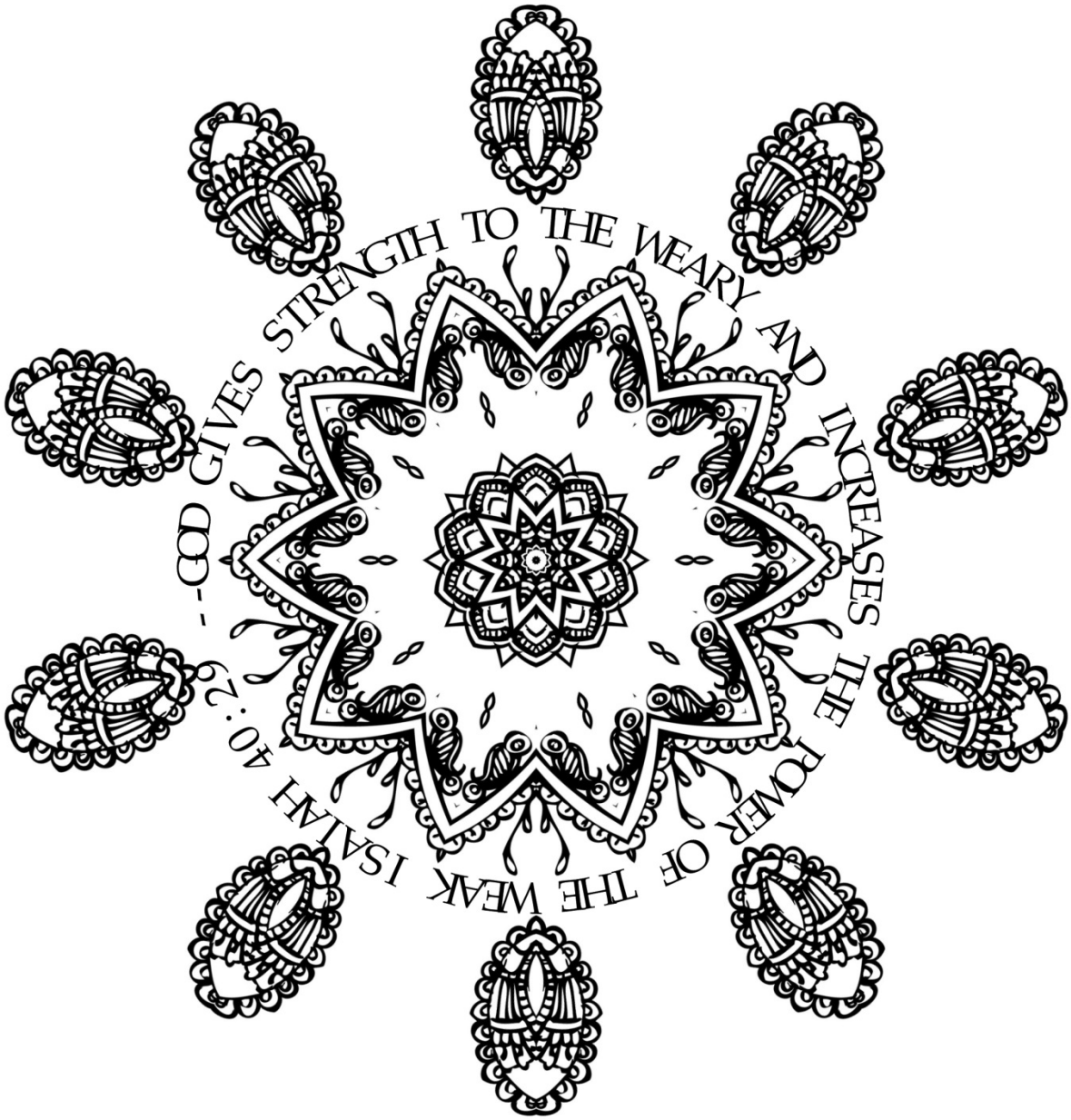
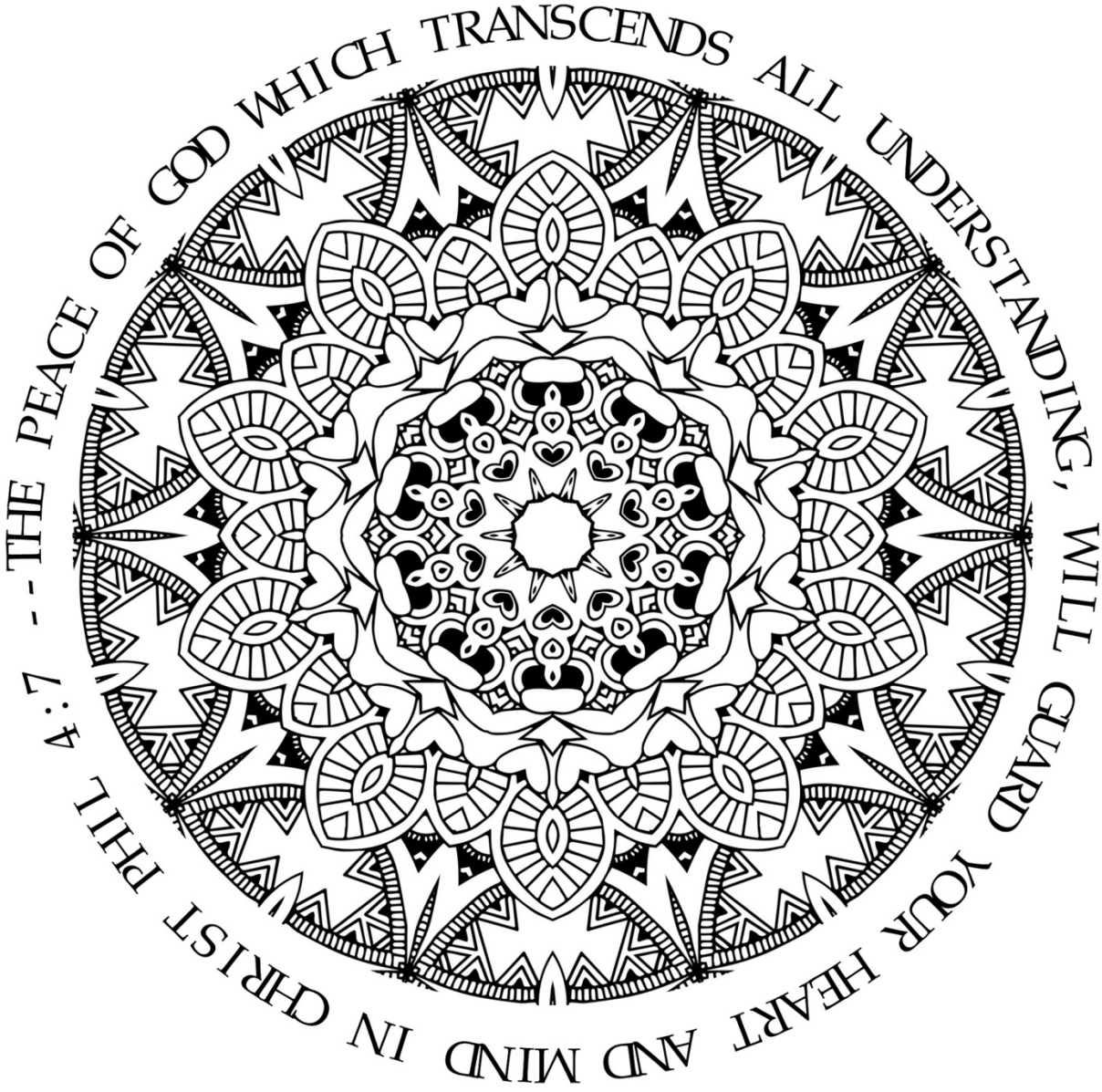
## WATERING SESSIONS

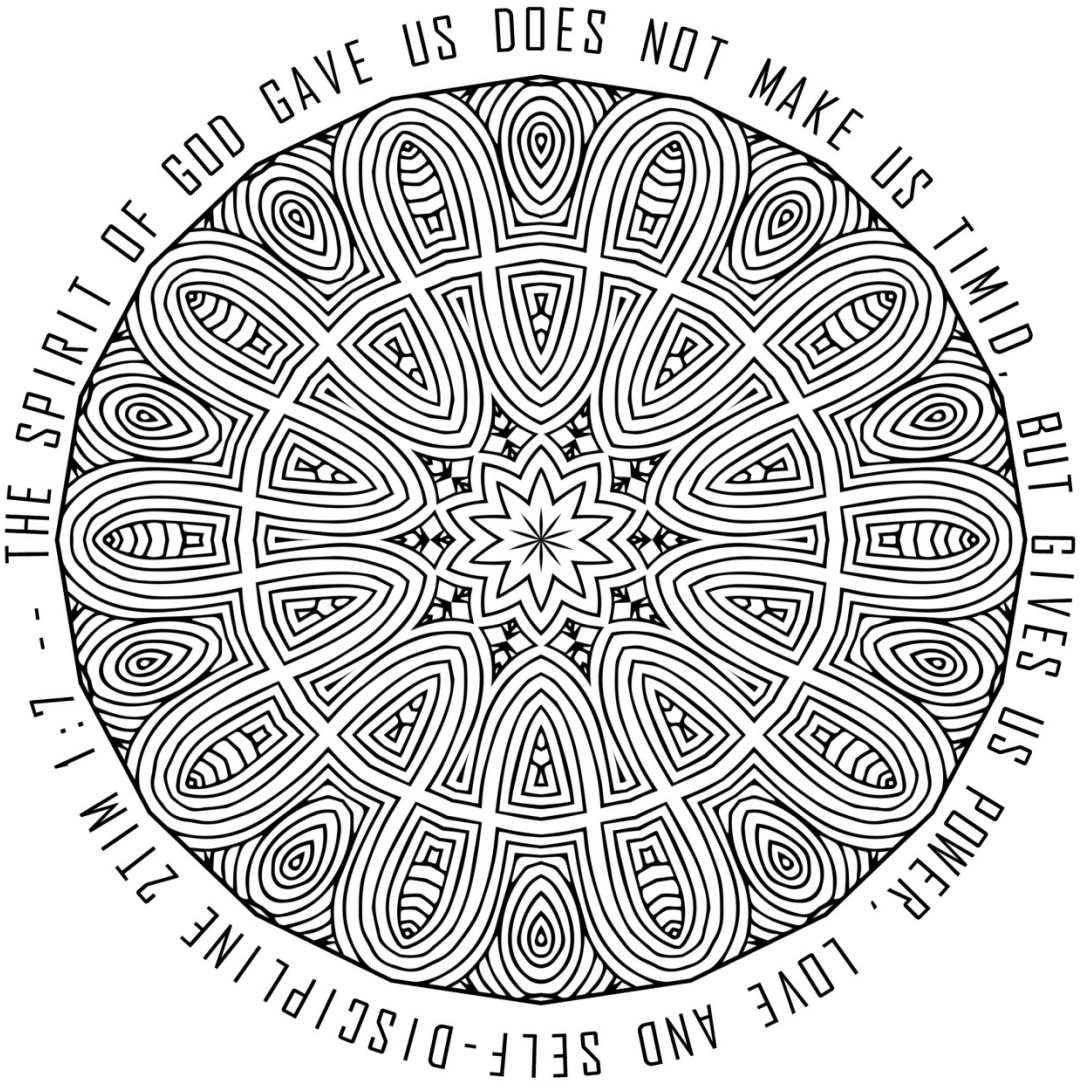
# COLORING PAGES

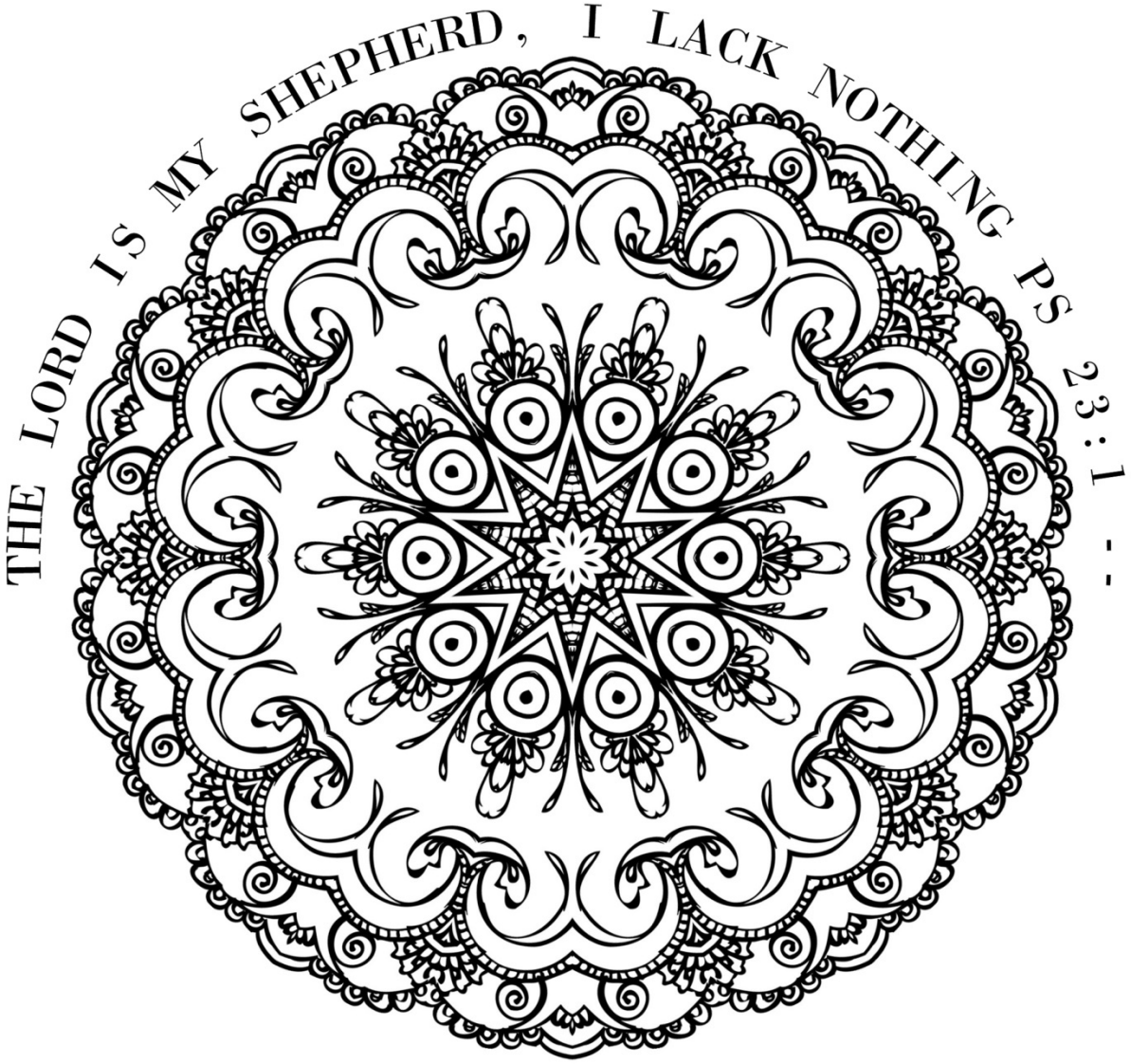

DON'T BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERY SITUATION, BY PRAYER AND PETITION, WITH THANKSGIVING, PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD PHIL 4:6 --


TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND DO NOT LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING PROV 3:5 --

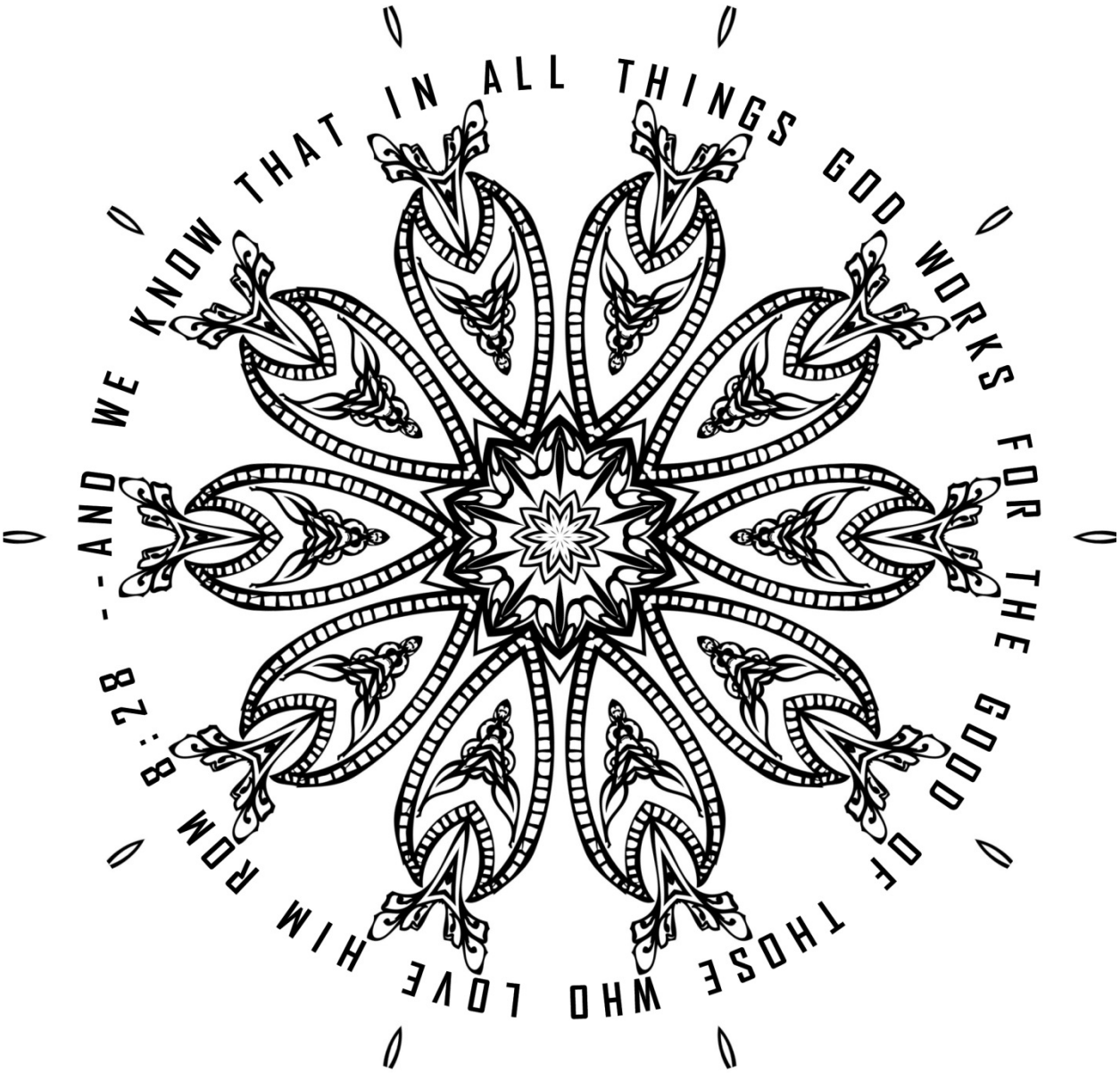

GIVES STRENGTH TO THE WEARY AND INCREASES THE
POWER OF THE WEAK ISAIAH 40:29
- GOD -

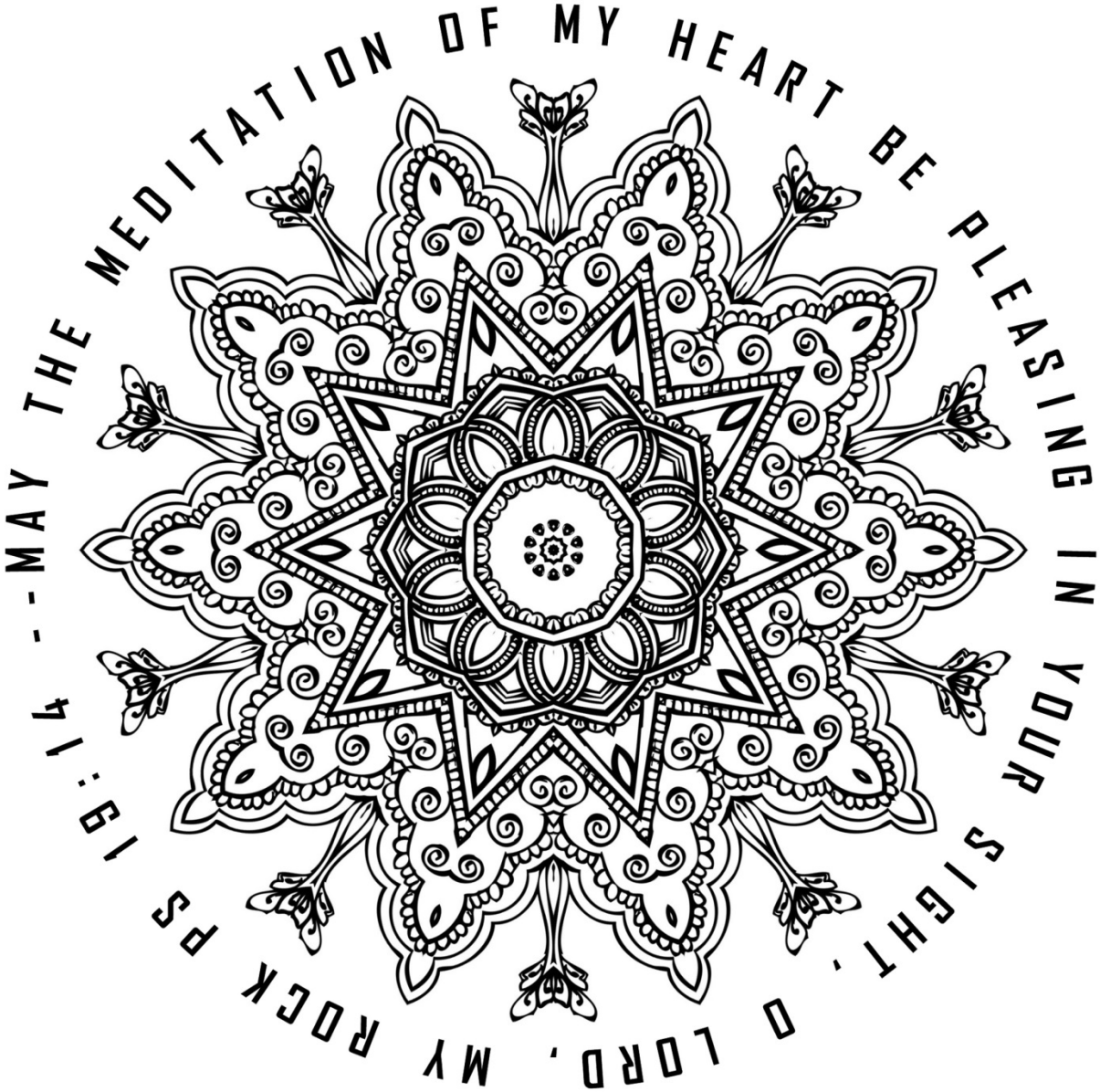

THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD YOUR HEART AND MIND IN CHRIST PHIL 4:7 --

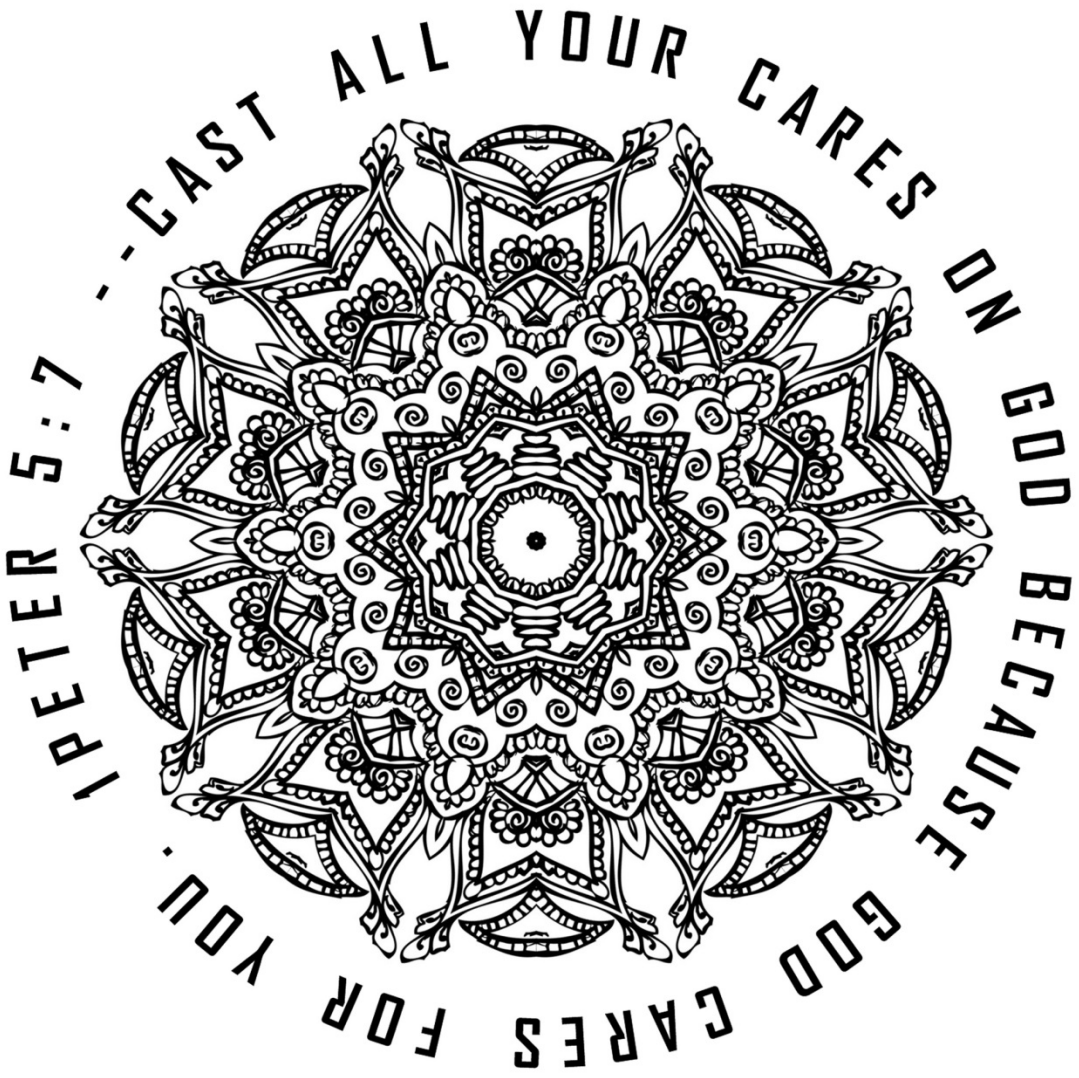

THE SPIRIT OF GOD GAVE US DOES NOT MAKE US TIMID. BUT GIVES US POWER. LOVE AND SELF-DISCIPLINE 2TIM 1:7 --

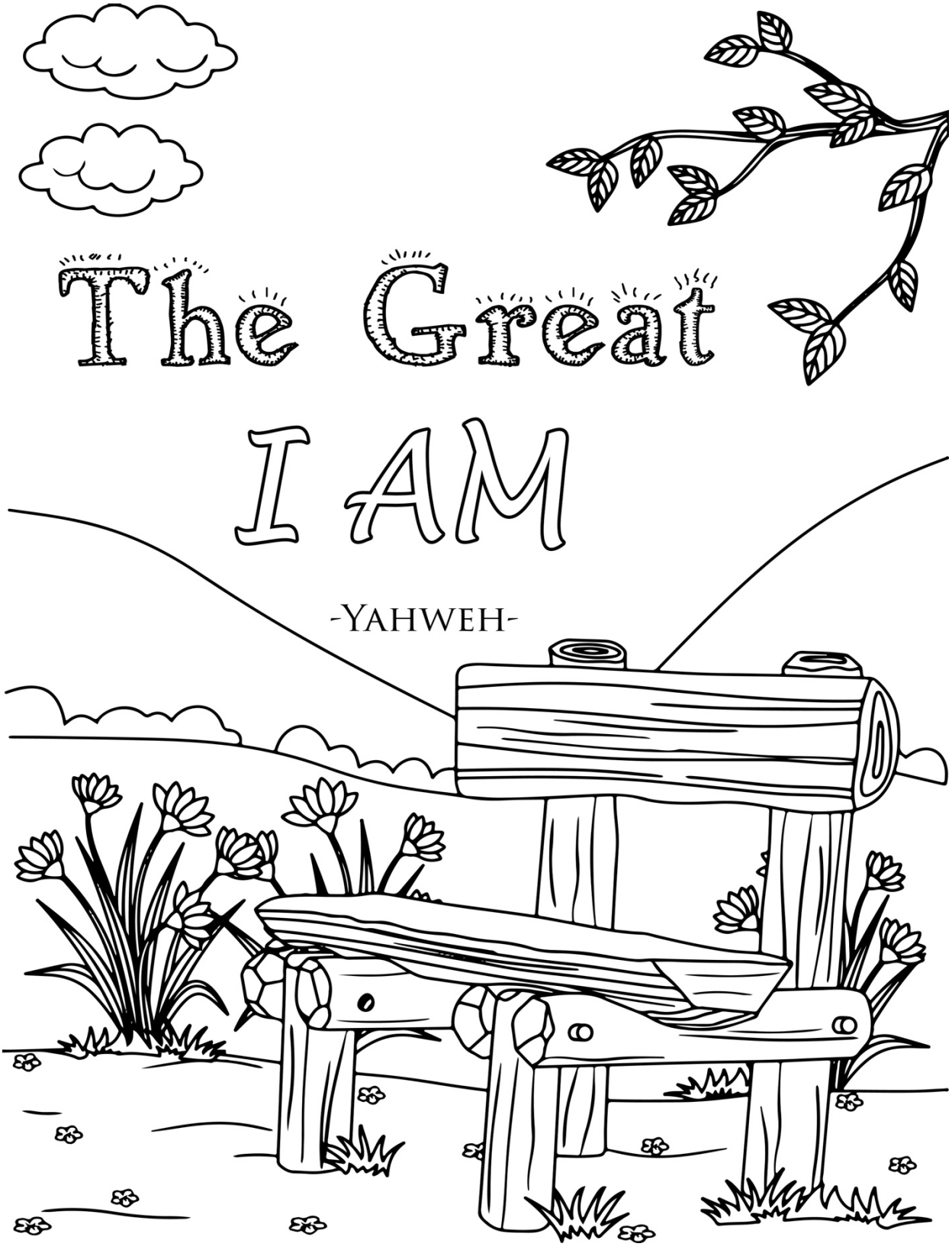

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD, I LACK NOTHING PS 23:1 --

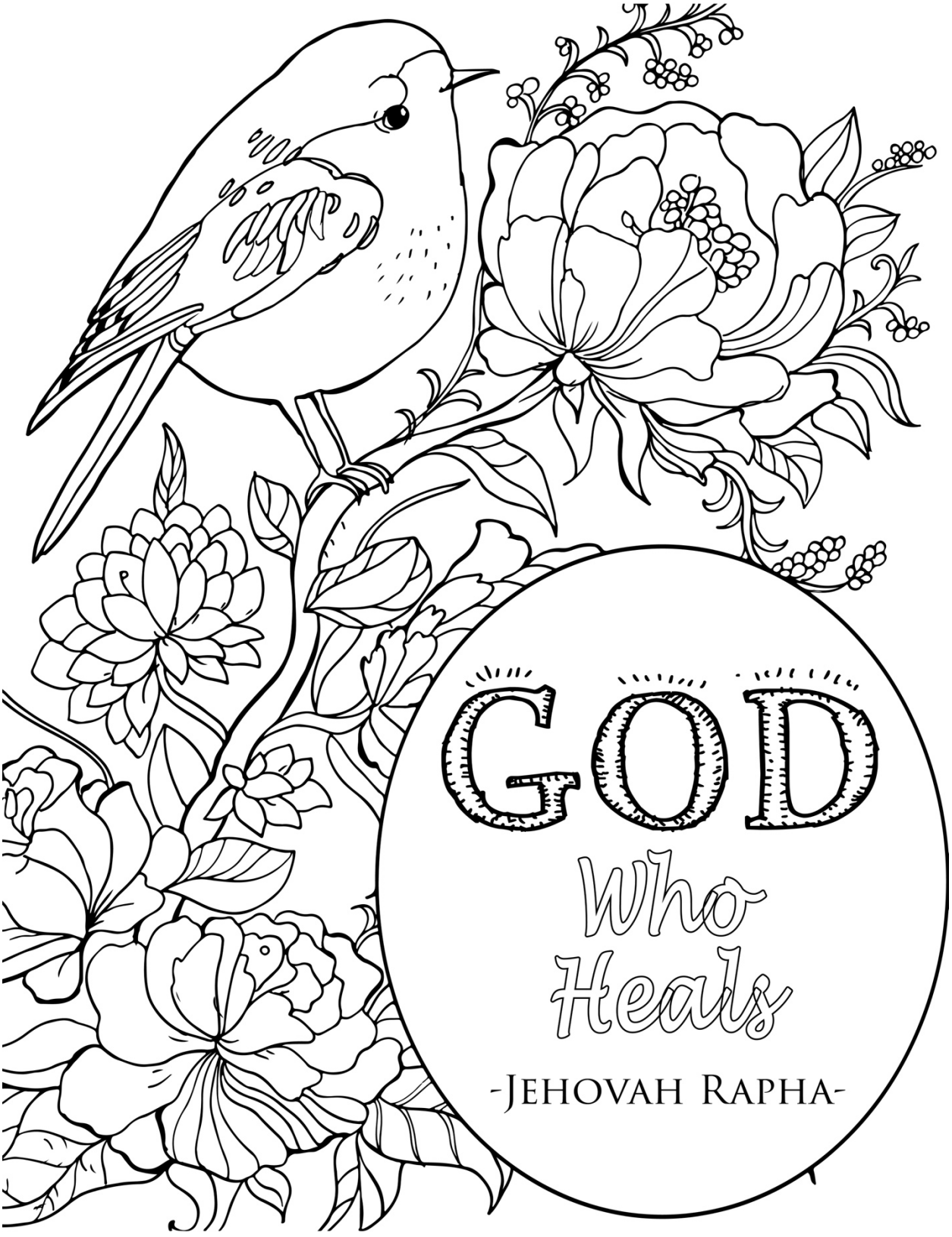
- - BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER EPH 6 : 10

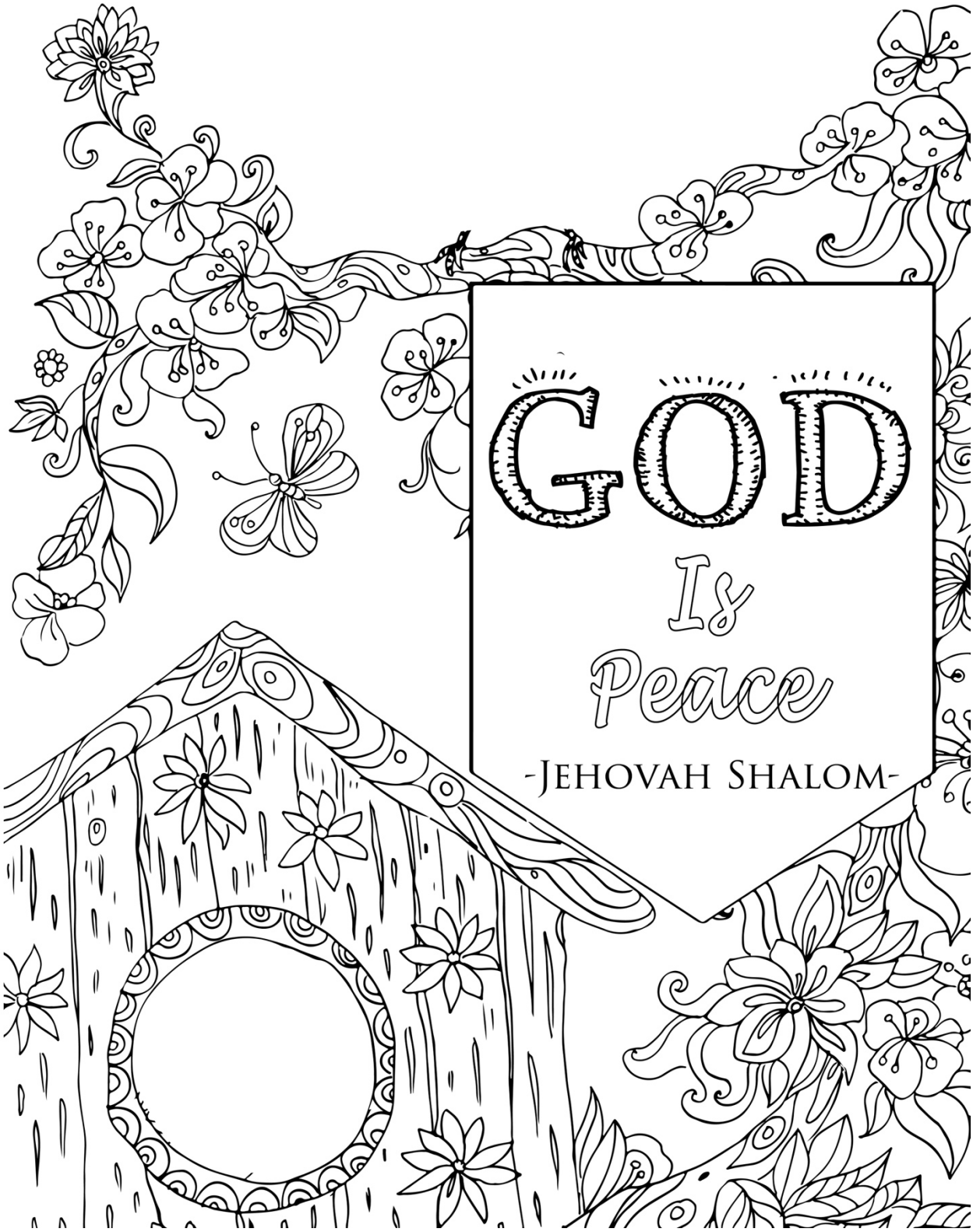

AND WE KNOW THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM ROM 8::28 --

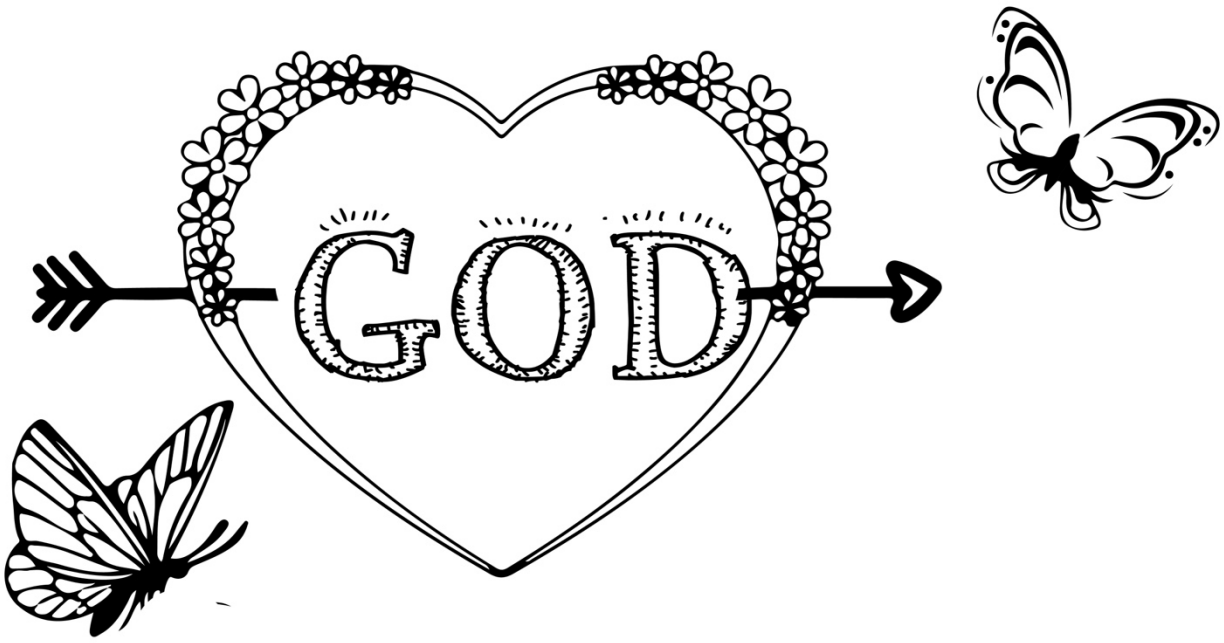

MAY THE MEDITATION OF MY HEART BE PLEASING IN YOUR SIGHT, O LORD, MY ROCK PS 19:14 --


1PETER 5:7 --CAST ALL YOUR CARES ON GOD BECAUSE GOD CARES FOR YOU.

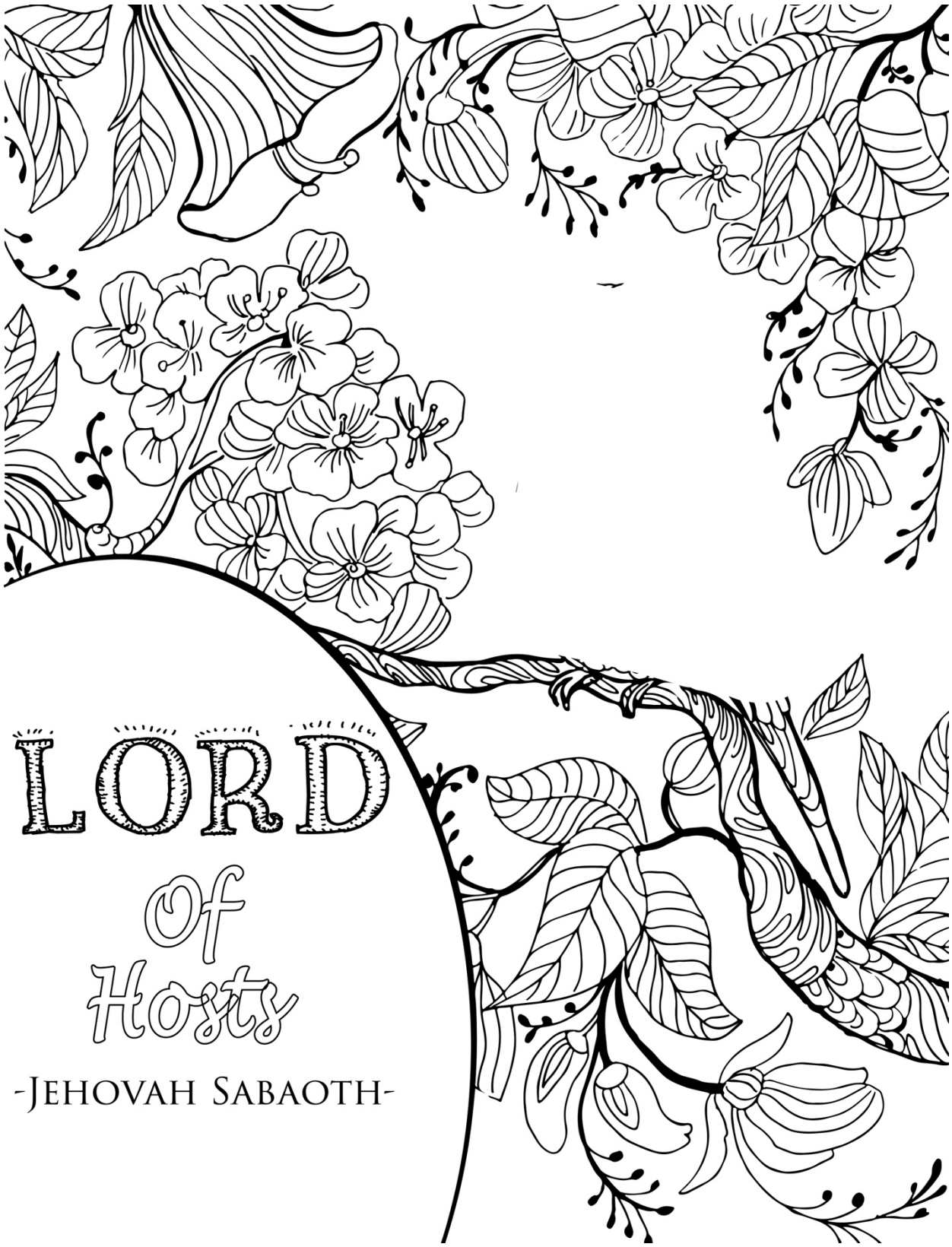

The Great
I AM
-YAHWEH-

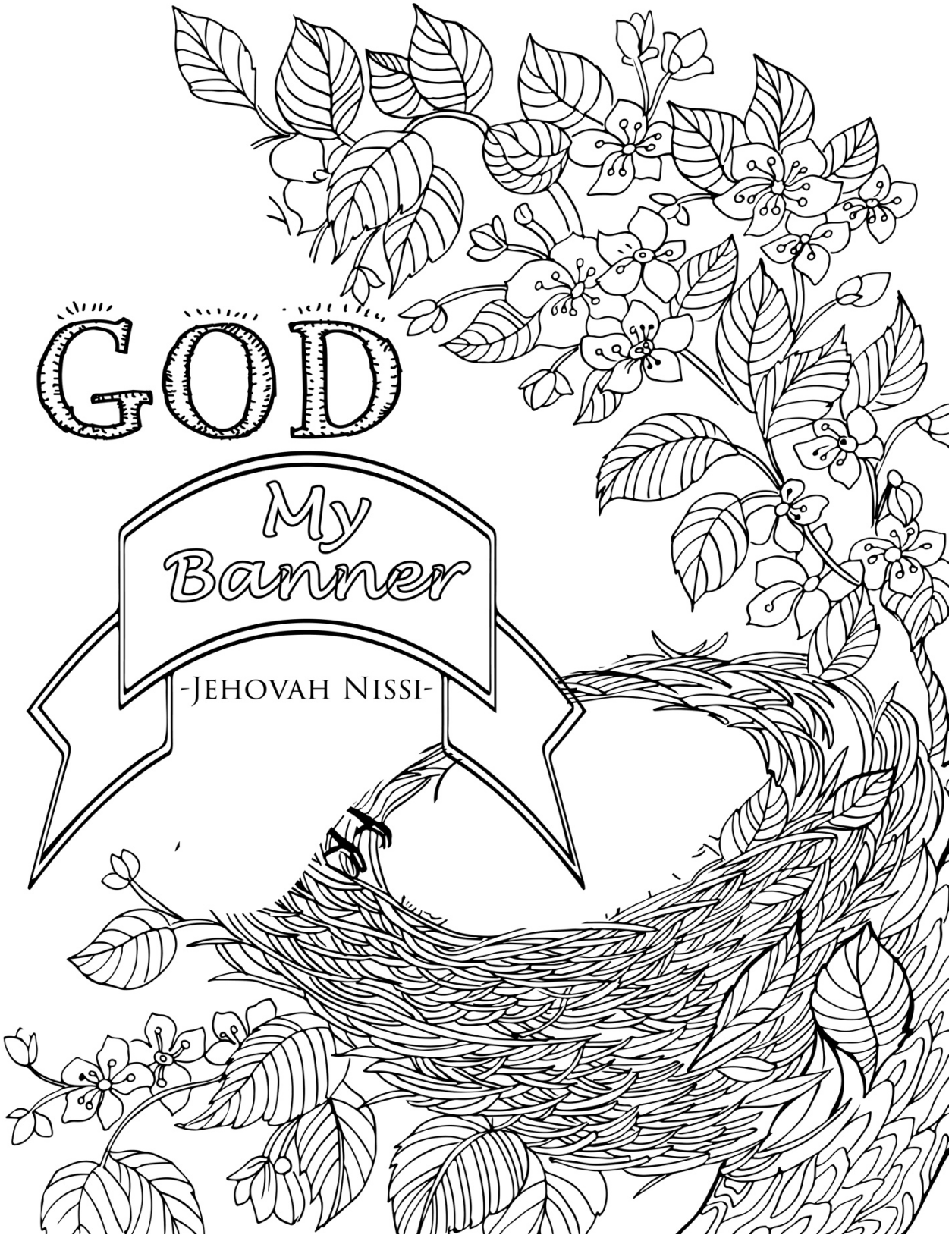

GOD
Who
Heals
-Jehovah Rapha-


GOD
Is
Peace
-Jehovah Shalom-



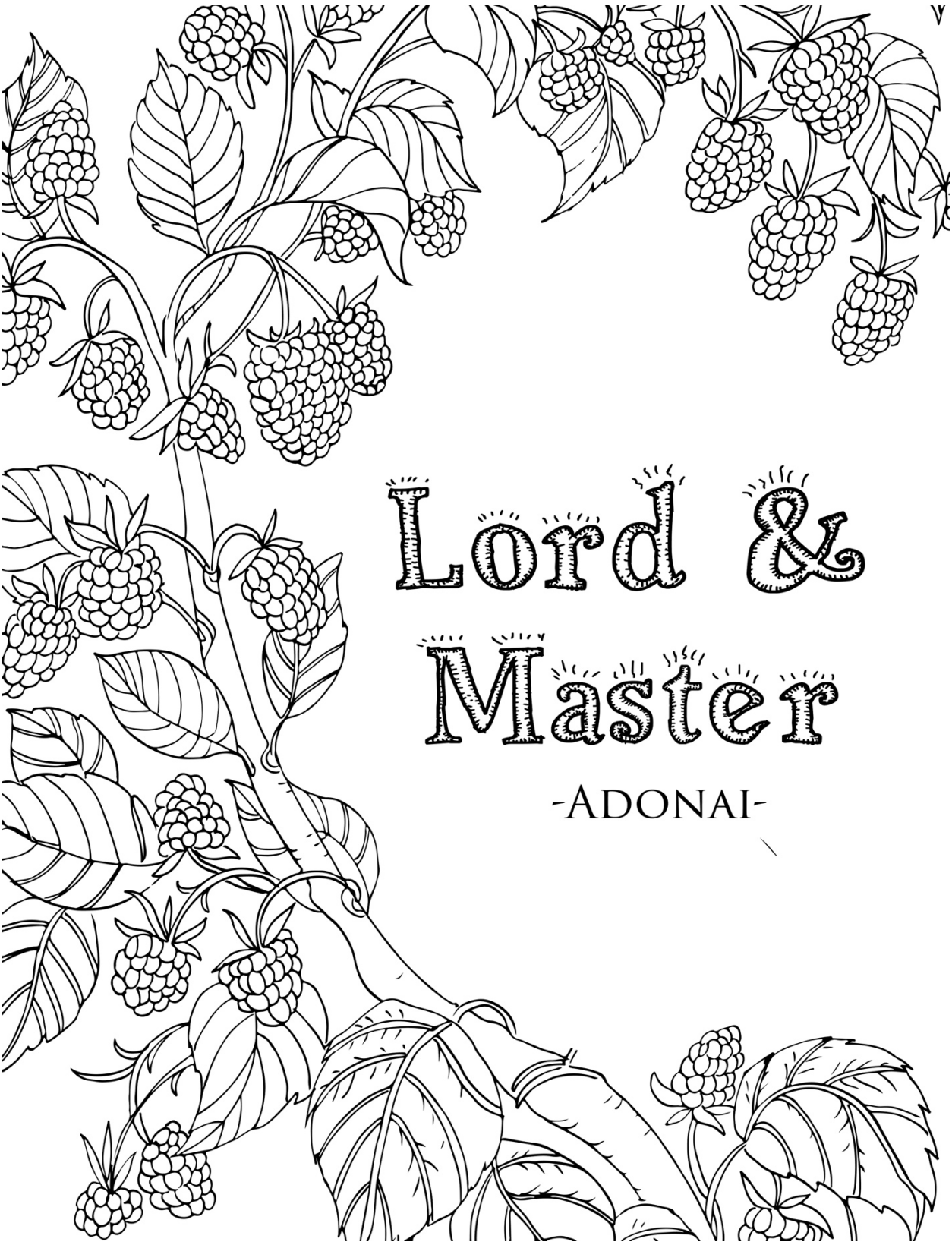

-Jehovah Jireh-

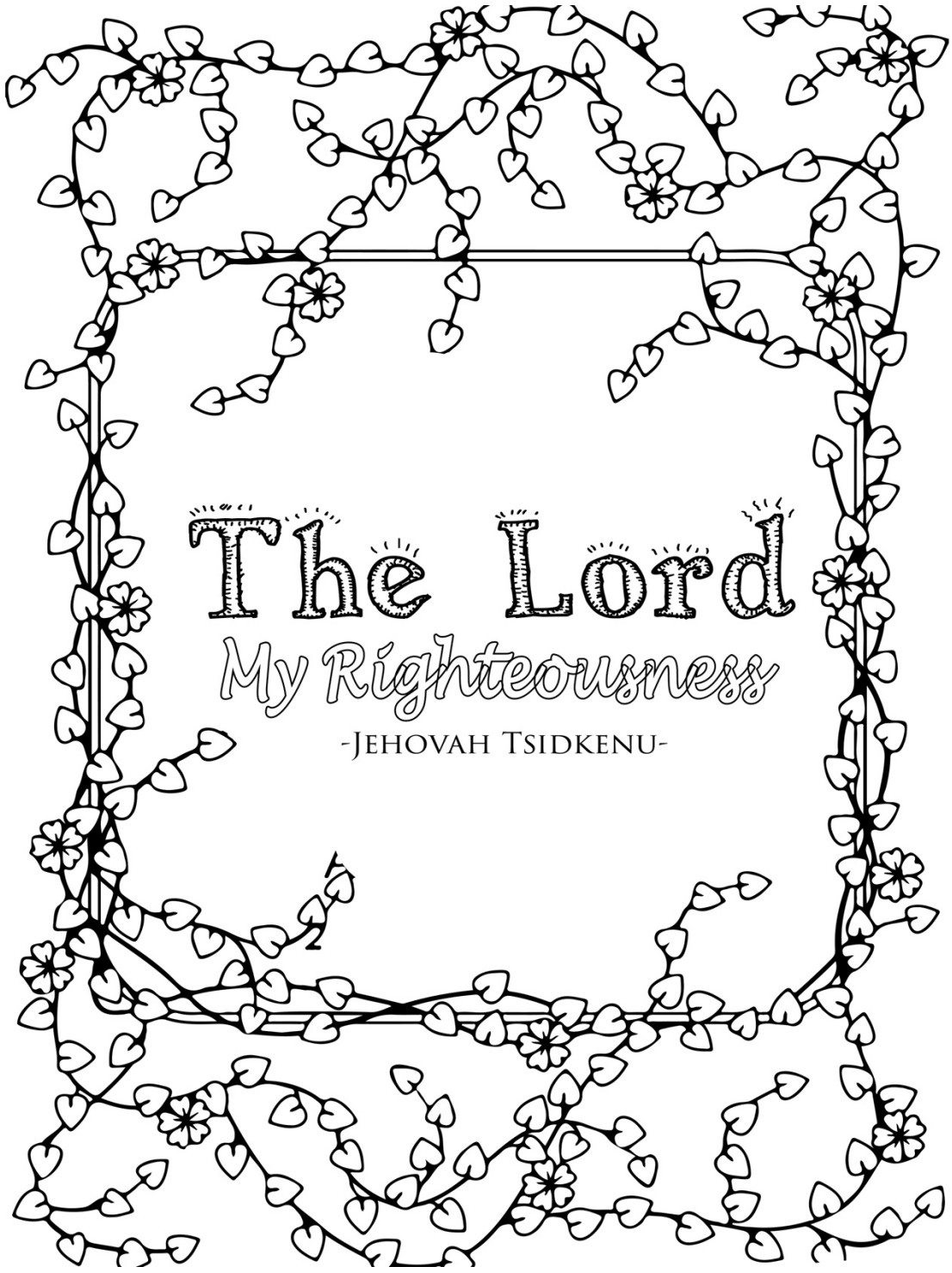

LORD
Of
Hosts
-Jehovah Sabaoth-

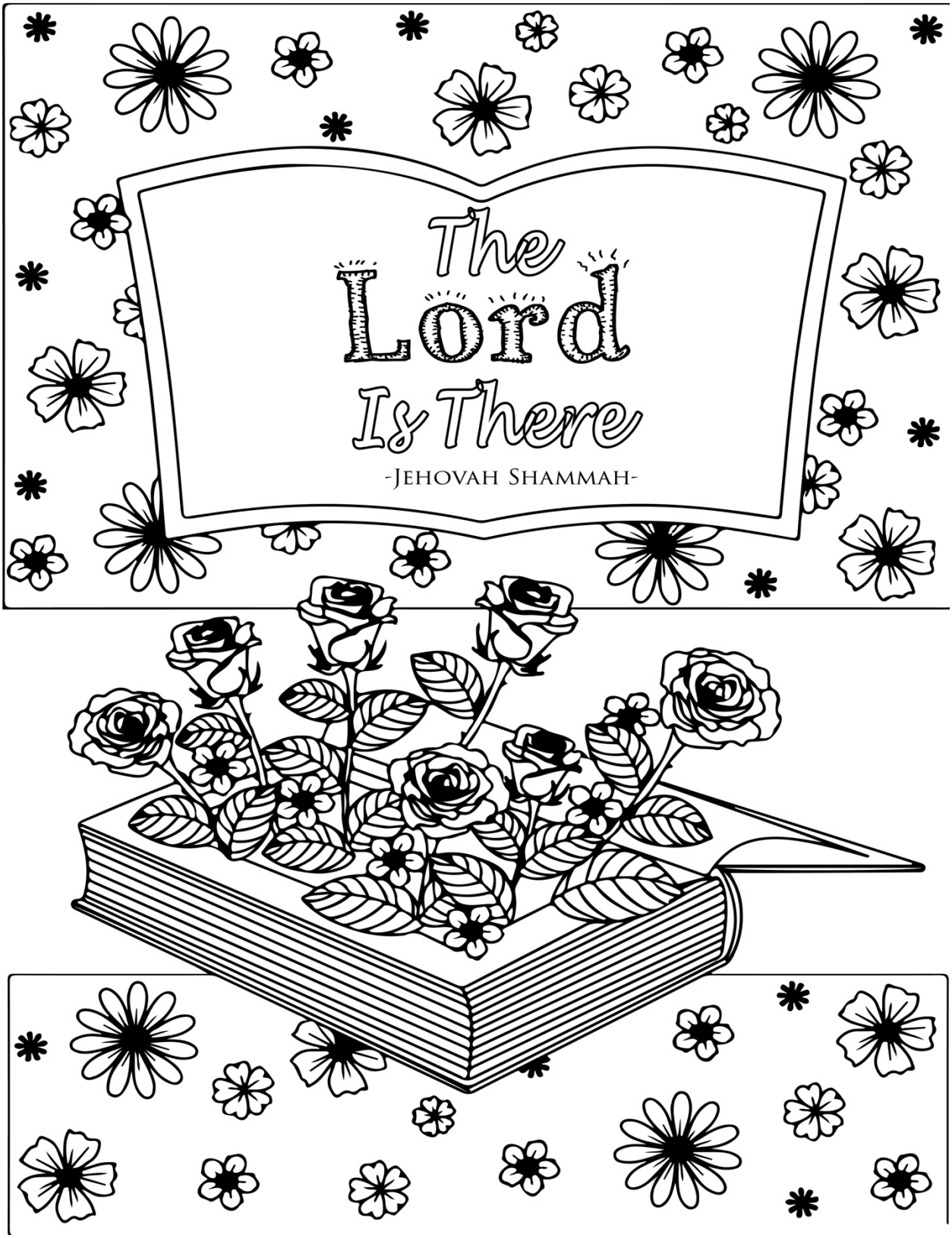

GOD
My Banner
-Jehovah Nissi-

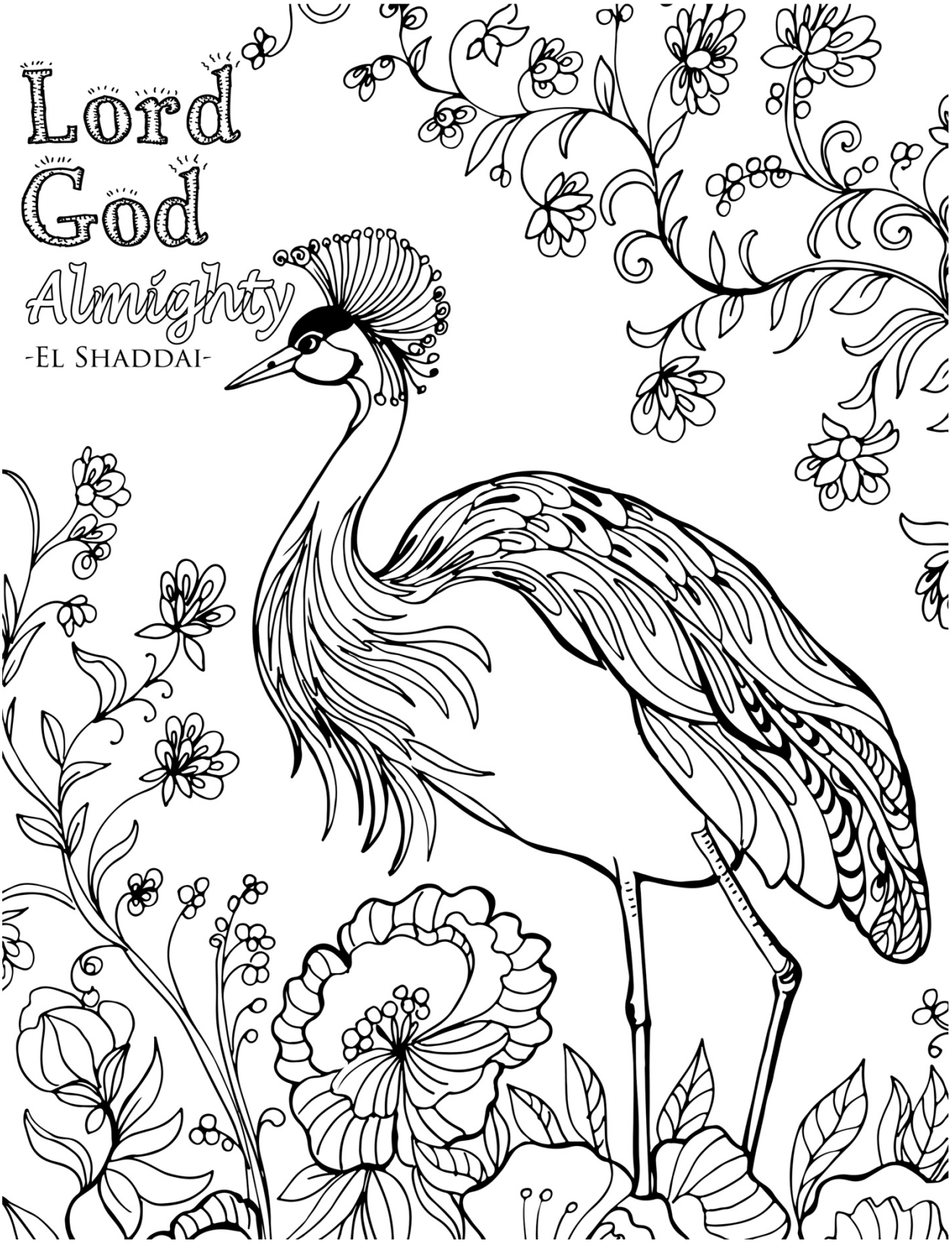
# The Most High God

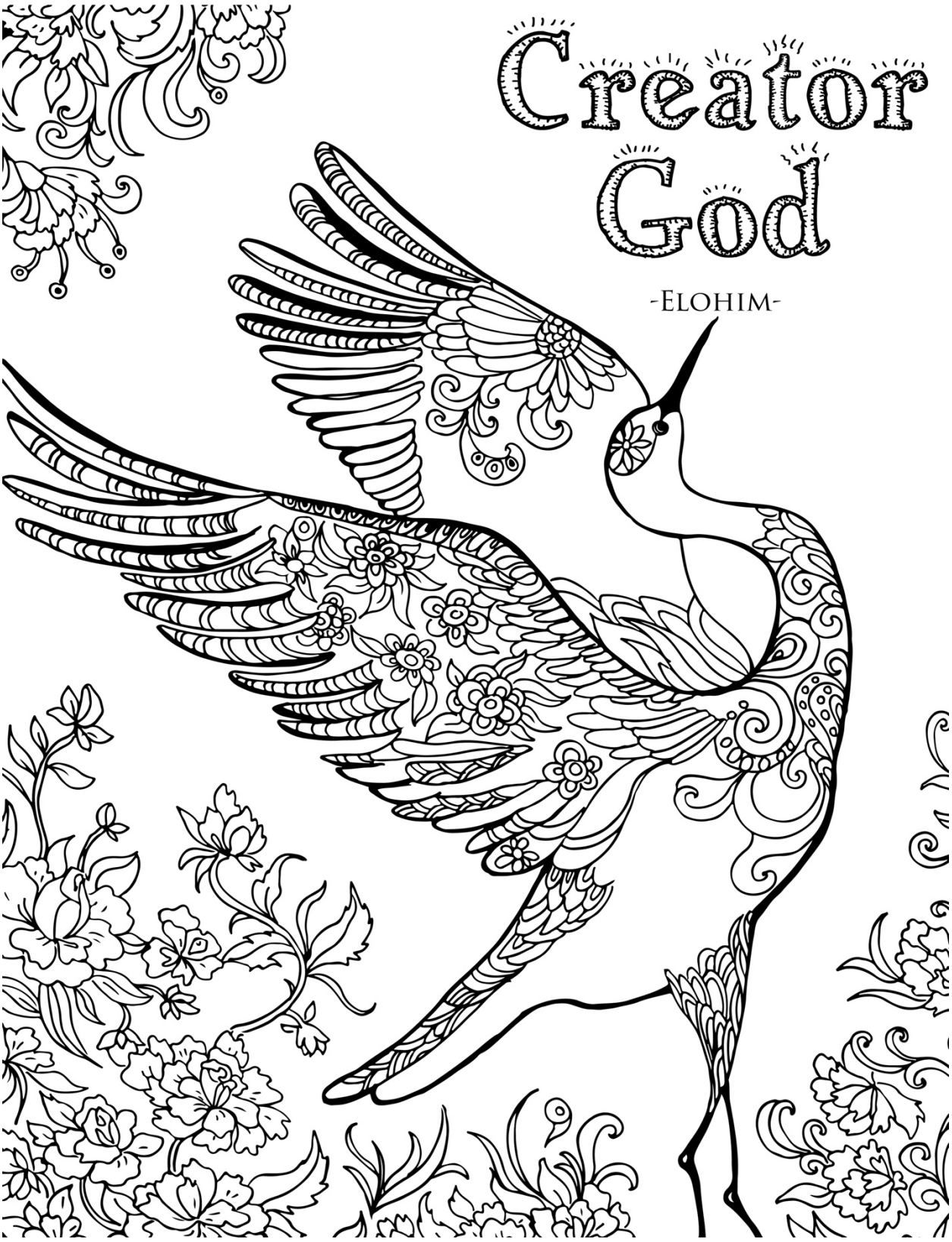
-El Elyon-

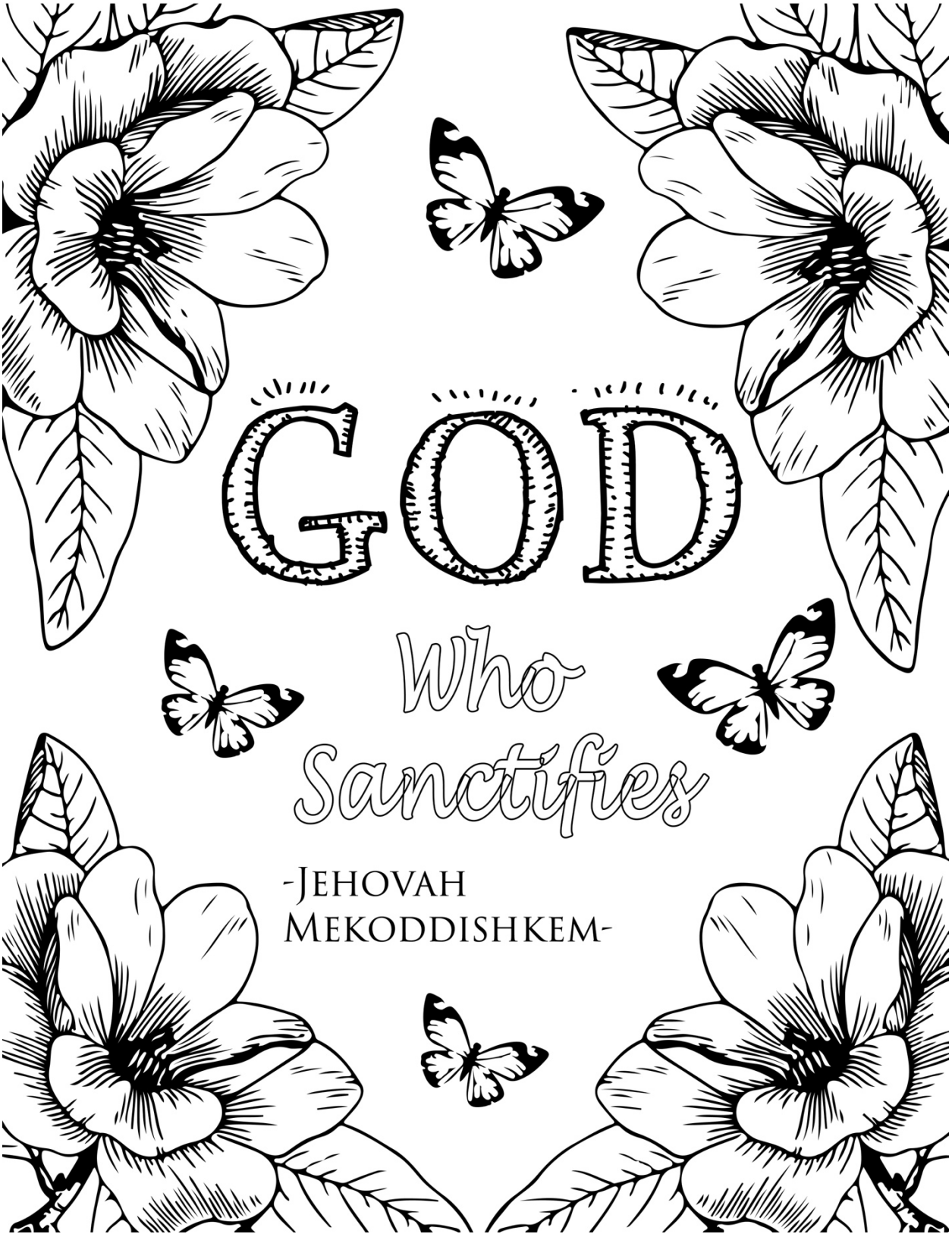

Lord &
Master
-ADONAI-

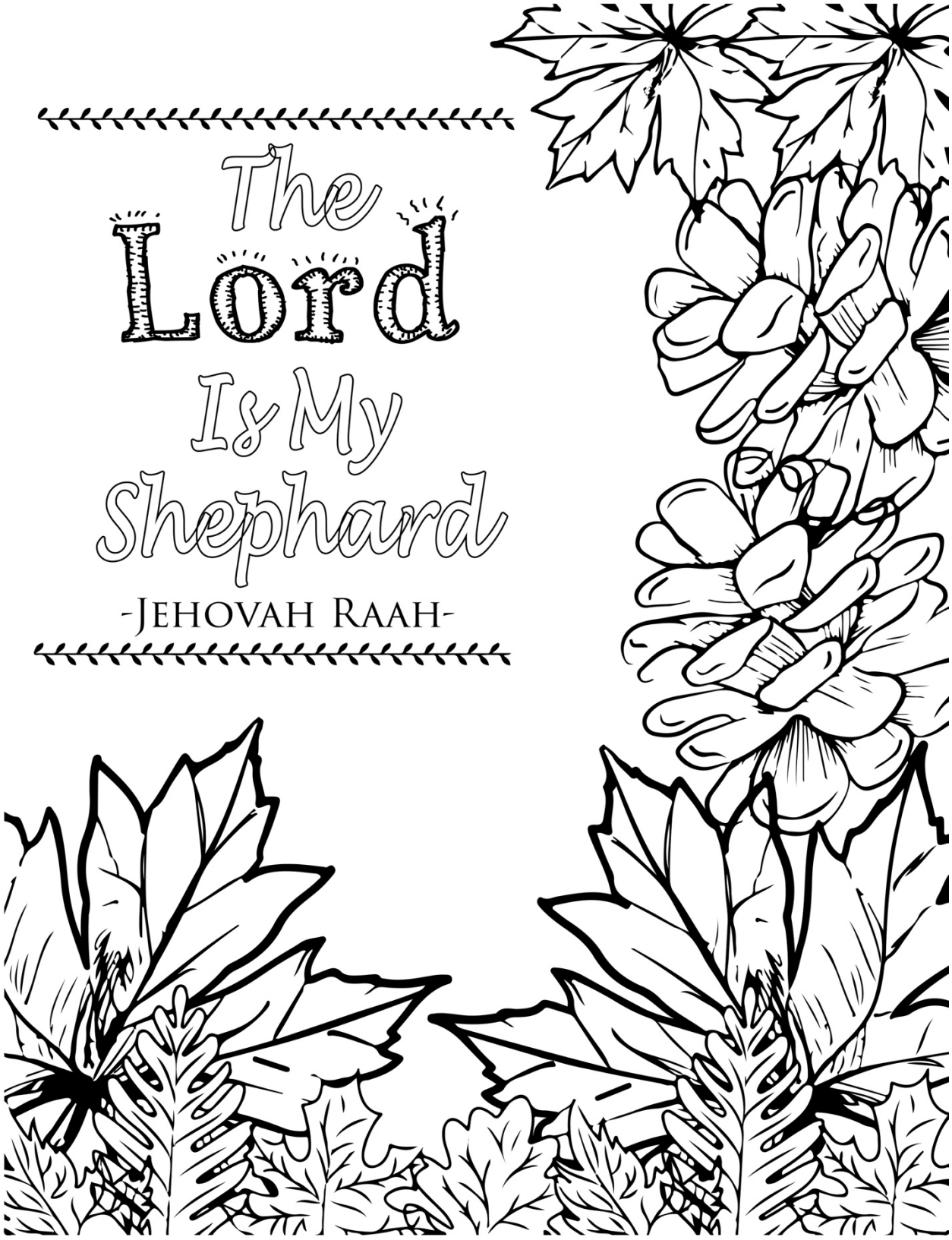

The Lord
My Righteousness
-Jehovah Tsidkenu-


The
Lord
Is There
-Jehovah Shammah-


Lord
God
Almighty
-El Shaddai-

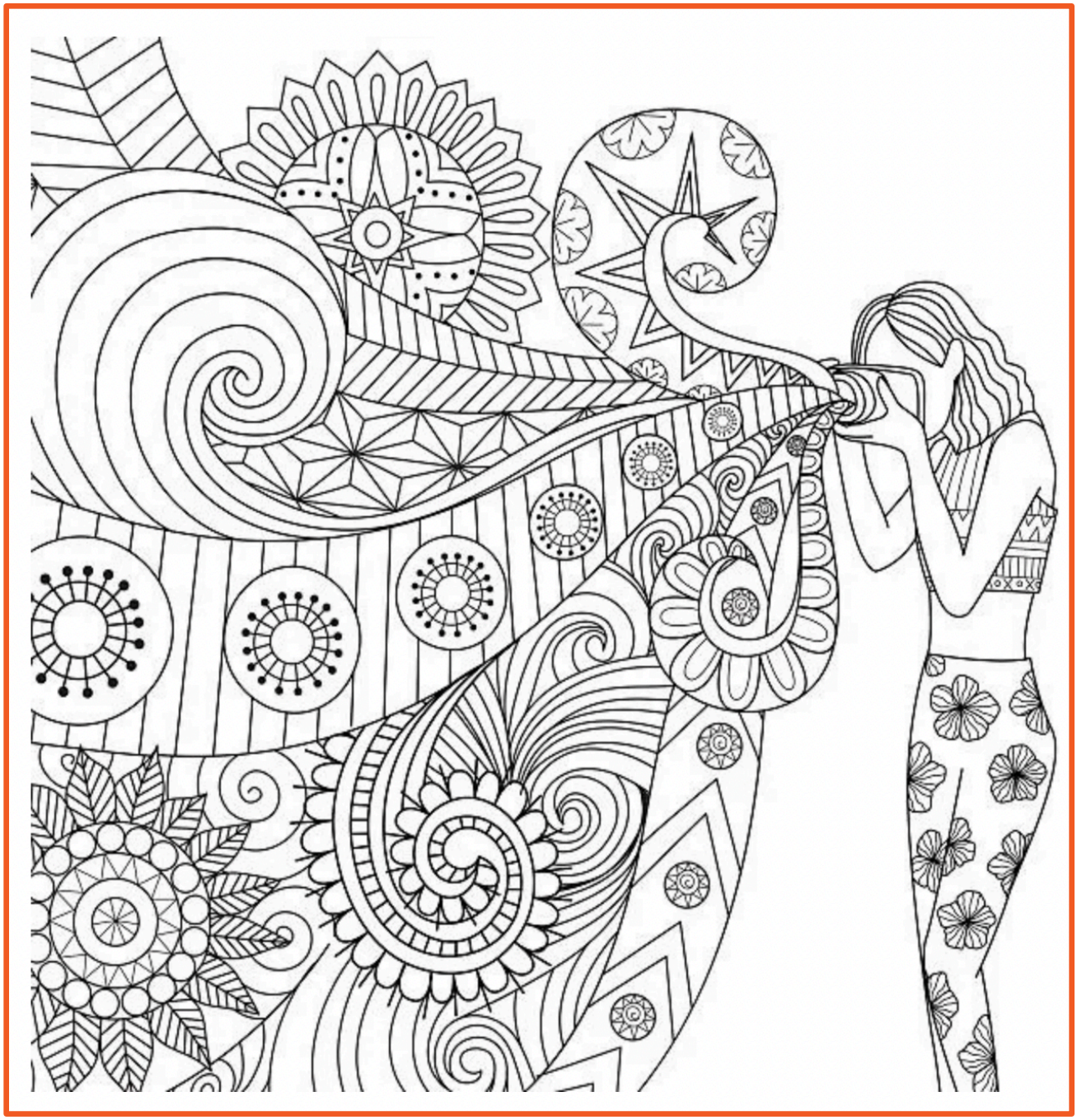

Creator
God
-Elohim-


GOD
Who
Sanctifies
-Jehovah
Mekoddishkem-


The
Lord
Is My
Shephard
-Jehovah Raah-

# The Everlasting God

-El Olam-



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## WATERING SESSIONS

# WRITTEN RESOURCES

# Courage & Renewal®
# Touchstones

CENTER for COURAGE & RENEWAL®

## Give and receive welcome.

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

## Be present as fully as possible.

Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.

## What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.

This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.

## Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

## No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

## Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions.

Do not respond with counsel or corrections. Using honest, open questions helps us "hear each other into deeper speech."

Learn more at **www.couragerenewal.org**

# Principles
## of the Courage & Renewal® Approach

CENTER for COURAGE & RENEWAL®

01 Everyone has an inner teacher.

02 Inner work requires solitude and community.

03 Inner work must be invitational.

04 Our lives move in cycles like the seasons.

05 An appreciation of paradox enriches our lives and helps us hold greater complexity.

06 We live with greater integrity when we see ourselves whole.

07 A "hidden wholeness" underlies our lives.

Learn more at **www.couragerenewal.org**

# Practices
## of the Courage & Renewal® Approach

CENTER for COURAGE & RENEWAL®

**01** **Create spaces that are open**
and hospitable, but resource-rich and charged with expectancy.

**02** **Commit to no fixing,**
advising, "saving" or correcting one another.

**03** **Ask honest, open questions**
to "hear each other into speech".

**04** **Explore the intersection**
of the universal stories of human experience with the personal stories of our lives.

**05** **Use multiple modes of reflection**
so everyone can find their place and pace.

**06** **Honor confidentiality.**

Learn more at **www.couragerenewal.org**

# The discipline of silence

## Practical guidelines

1. Discipline yourself to be silent for 15-30 minutes. Quiet your heart and mind. Just be still and sit quietly before God. Allow God to fill your whole being.
2. Keep a notebook handy because it does sometimes happen that you keep on thinking about things you must do later; you can then jot these down so that you don't forget. Soon you will stop thinking about these 'urgent matters' that need your attention, and your mind will quiet down.
3. Give all your desires, worries and burdens to God one by one until your heart is quiet and unconcerned before the Lord. Spend a couple of minutes on this.
4. The purpose of this time of silence is not to write, to read the Bible or listen to music. Just sit quietly with the Lord. It is not in the first place to try to listen if God is saying something to you. Should you however, sense that He is speaking to you, write down what you experience Him saying to you and become silent again. This silence is simply for sitting quietly in the presence of God.
5. After the time of silence you may take your journal and write down your experience, emotions, frustrations and thoughts on this time. As the week progresses you will see how your thoughts and emotions grow and change.
6. You are brought to a standstill during these silences and this usually breaks the influence of stress on your life. It allows you to reflect on what you are busy with and it is also a good time to ask yourself this question: What was the effect of silence on my life? After experiencing the power of silence, what should change in my life?

## A short study on the discipline of silence

There is a time for everything... A time to be silent and a time to speak (Eccl.3:7) In our modern world with its continuous noise, the disciples of the Lord Jesus have to re-discover the discipline of silence. Without regular and prolonged times of silence where we silently wait upon the Lord and allow silence to work in us, we will not be able to remain standing against the flood of words that submerge us, the opinions of people, the power of the world and the attacks of the evil one.

Silence is necessary to shut out all other voices so that we can hear God's voice. Many voices talk to us all day long: newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, posters, e-mail, the Internet; the voices of people's opinions, those in authority, preachers, books we read, our own ambitions and dreams, desires and passions. There are voices from the past: my father's voice thundering in my ears when I want to do something wrong, a teacher's reprimand, the example of a friend. There are the voices of culture, of traditions, of the community we live in who want to prescribe and decide how we should live. In the silence we learn to know the voice of the Shepherd. Jesus says: My sheep know my voice. How many of us know His voice? Can we distinguish it from all the other voices in the world?

Silence can be frightening. It is in silence that I realise it is only God and I. In silence I am confronted with my own emptiness, insignificance and finiteness...and with God.

**The complete document is in the digital folder.**

**Four Types of Resilience.**

Jane McGonigal

"People who practice these behaviors regularly live longer than those who don't."

1. **Physical resilience**: You are physically resilient if you don't sit still longer than an hour at a time. You keep moving, especially when you don't feel like it. I don't know about you, but as I age, the temptation to sit on the couch or to nurse a pain by not moving is high. A physically resilient person works out the kinks and makes physical activity a priority.

2. **Mental Resilience:** You are mentally resilient if you test your brain. Do puzzles. Play board games. Try new hobbies. Read new books. Stay engaged in work. Grow a garden. In short, mentally resilient folks stay challenged.

3. **Emotional Resilience:** You are emotionally resilient if you engage in regular reflection on things beautiful, fanciful, and visionary. Emotional resilience exercises our capability to imagine, dream, plan and create. It fortifies the soul. Emotional resilience allows us to find positive things even when circumstances stay grim.

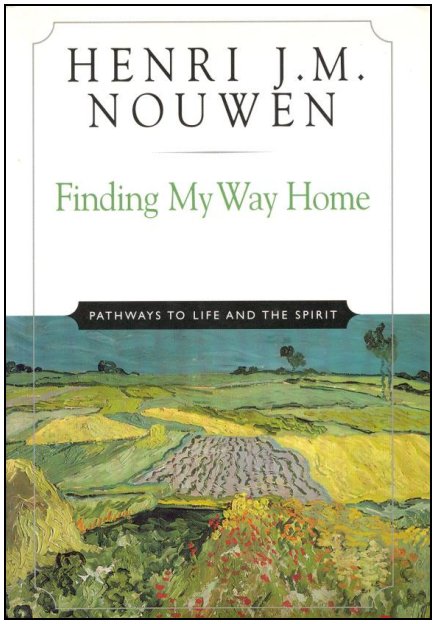
4. **Social Resilience**: When you stay in touch with others socially, you are being socially resilient. Hugs and handshakes stimulate the brain. Having a friend who you look forward to visiting with and taking the initiative to stay engaged is social resilience.

# Finding My Way Home

PATHWAYS TO LIFE AND THE SPIRIT

Henri J.M. Nouwen

**Discussion Questions for Nouwen Reading Groups**
**Five week Program**

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# Touchstones
## *for Creating Trustworthy Space*
### The Courage Way Practice

**Touchstones are our operating guidelines for holding the meaningful conversations of inner work and trust building.** They are based in the Circle of Trust® approach developed by the Center for Courage & Renewal and Parker J. Palmer. Touchstones form strong boundaries for interactions and are designed to help us reconsider the different ways we relate to ourselves and to others.

Together, the touchstones help leaders and facilitators create a hospitable "container" for conversation. Beyond group settings, touchstones can help you respond with more presence in daily moments of pressure, challenge, and tension. These touchstones can also be adapted to define how you work together with integrity and trust in an organization, community, or network—inviting the best of each person to show up and contribute.

### Give and receive welcome.

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this space we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

### Be present as fully as possible.

Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.

### Extend invitation, not demand.

This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.

### Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth does not mean interpreting, correcting, or debating what others say. Speak using "I" statements.

### No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

### Practice asking honest, open questions.

Instead of offering counsel or corrections, asking honest, open questions helps us "hear each other into deeper speech."

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CENTER FOR Courage & Renewal

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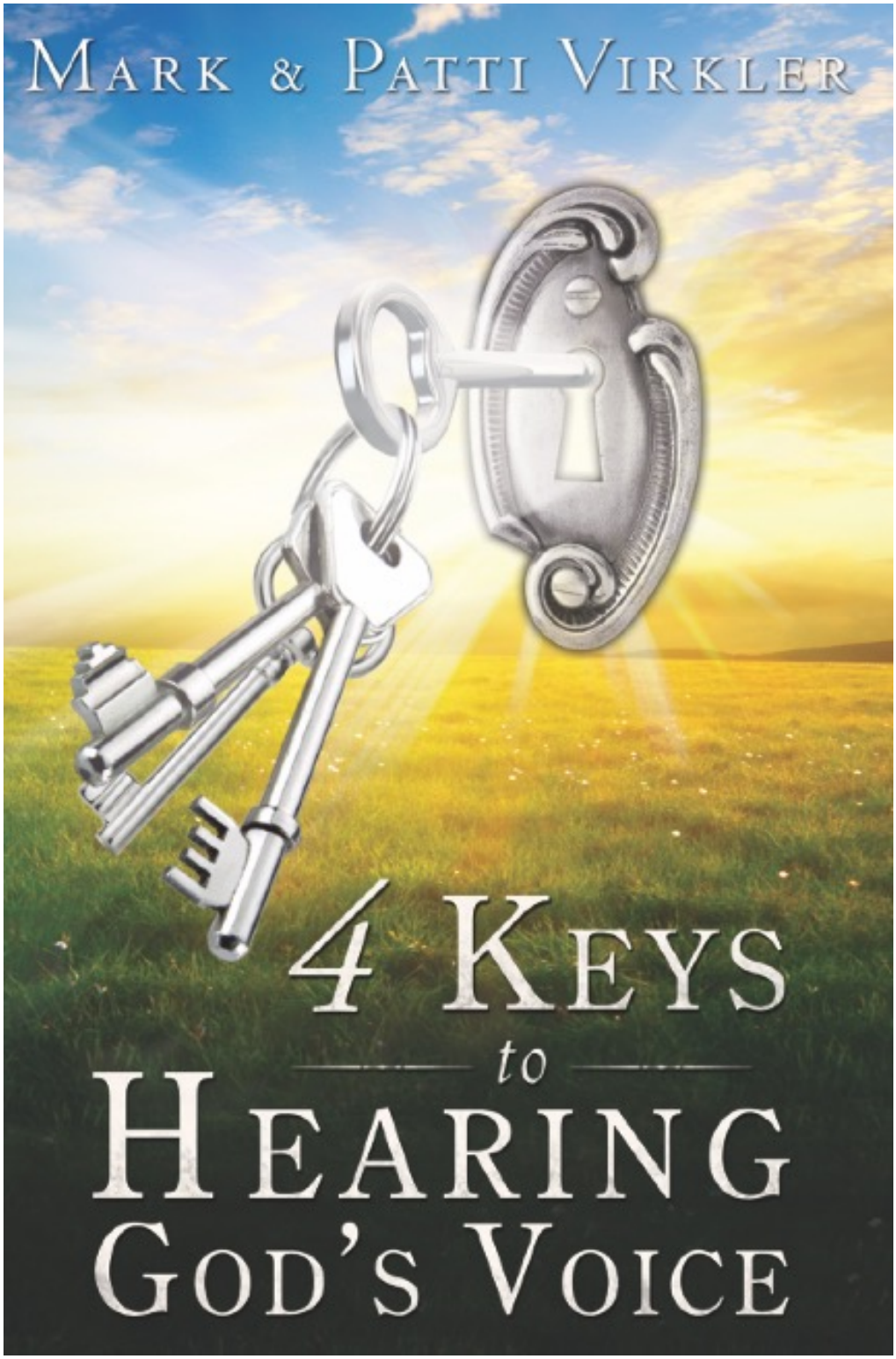


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## The Clearness Committee: A Communal Approach to Discernment *

Palmer writes that "many of us face a dilemma when trying to deal with a personal problem, question, or decision. On the one hand, we know that the issue is ours alone to resolve and that we have the inner resources to resolve it, but access to our own resources is often blocked by layers of inner "stuff" – confusion, habitual thinking, fear, despair. On the other hand, we know that friends might help us uncover our inner resources and find our way, but by exposing our problem to others, we run the risk of being invaded and overwhelmed by their assumptions, judgments, and advice – a common and alienating experience. As a result, we often privatize these vital questions in our lives; at the very moment when we need all the help we can get. . . ."

"Clearness Committees," dating from the Quakers in the 1660's, are based on the simple but crucial conviction: each of us has an inner teacher, a voice of truth, that offers the guidance and power we need to deal with our problems. But that inner voice is often garbled by various kinds of inward and outward interference. Clearness Committees are not intended to give advice or "fix" people from the outside in but rather to help people remove the interference so that they can discover their own wisdom from the inside out.

Clearness Committees take the form of having a small group of trusted folks ask the "focus person" a series of "honest open questions." The Committee's work is guided by some simple but crucial rules and understandings, summarized below.

- Confidentiality is essential, both during and after the process
- Normally the focus person chooses his or her committee of 5-6 trusted people
- The focus person writes up his or her issue in 3-5 pages, a statement of the problem, relevant background factors, and any hunches about what's on the horizon regarding the problem
- Clearness Committees meet for 3 hours (and maybe for a later 2nd or 3rd meeting), and a recording secretary is named
- The meeting begins with a time of centering silence and an invitation for the focus person to break the silence when ready with a brief summary of the issue at hand. Then committee members may speak following 1 rule: *members are forbidden to speak to the focus person in any way except to ask honest, open questions.*
- Normally the focus person responds to the questions as they are asked, generating more, and deeper questions. The focus person at all times has the right not to answer a question.
- The Clearness Committee must not become a grilling or cross-examination. Pacing should be relaxed, gentle, humane, and all must work to remain totally attentive to the focus person and his or her needs.
- The Committee should run for the full time allotted, ending with either using the last 20 minutes for additional questions, or for "mirroring" back what members heard the focus person say. 5 minutes of affirmation of the focus person follow.

* Clearness Committees are described in detail in Chapter 8 of Parker Palmer's book, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward An Undivided Life,* 2004

crosswalk.com

# How to Encounter God through Journaling

Whitney Hopler

*Editor's Note: The following is a report on the practical applications of **Helen Cepero**'s new book, Journaling as a Spiritual Practice: Encountering God through Attentive Writing, (InterVarsity Press, 2008).*

Writing has the power to help you see the beauty of God at work in your life experiences. When you express your thoughts and feelings in a journal, you'll be surprised by how much you discover about God in the process – and God will use your journal as a tool to transform you.

Here's how you can encounter God through journaling:

**Begin with prayer.** Invite God to use your journaling experiences to draw you closer to Him and help you grow as a person. Ask Him to use your journaling to help you discover more about both Him and yourself.

**Get ready.** Decide when and where you'll journal regularly. Choose any time or place that works best for you – from early morning journaling in a quiet room of your home, to late night journaling in a busy coffeehouse. Then buy a journal that appeals to you for writing your journal entries by hand, or set up a special file on your computer to type in your journal entries.

**Give yourself freedom.** Allow yourself to write or draw whatever comes to your mind. Don't criticize or censor your journal entries. Don't worry about trying to stick to grammar or spelling rules, trying to be logical, comparing yourself to others, or avoiding the expression of troubling thoughts or feelings. Simply write, to get what's on your mind out on paper or on the computer screen. Write what's true and real, keeping in mind that God loves you unconditionally.

**Check your motivation.** It's not enough to journal simply out of a sense that journaling is something that you ought to do, because guilt isn't an effective motivator. Make sure that you're journaling because you truly want to encounter God in the process. Your excitement about expecting to meet God when you journal will keep you motivated enough to make journaling a regular practice in your life.

**Face your fears.** Don't let a desire to avoid your fears keep you from journaling honestly about whatever you're thinking and feeling. Ask God to give you the courage to write about each of your fears openly, and expect that, as you do, God will meet you in the middle of them and help you grow. Instead of keeping your fears locked within you, let them pour out onto your journal's pages.

**Write a letter to God.** Use your journal to write to God, aiming to be truthful rather than nice. Tell Him where you are right now in your journey with Him, and wish you wish you were. Describe how you see God and how you see yourself at this point in your life's story.

**Witness to the truth.** List situations in your life where God is calling you to witness to biblical truth. Ask: "Where am I being asked to speak out and name a wrong being done to me or someone I know?", "Where am I being called to bring light to a situation that has been dimmed by the darkness of misunderstanding or sin?", "Where might I need to change everyday habits that make the environment within me and around me worse?", and "Where does the truth need to be named and lived?".

**Pay attention.** Spend a few minutes studying the place where you're journaling. Write for a while about what you *do* see; then write for a while about what you *don't* see. Finally, read your journal entries and write a response to what you did and didn't notice. Choose an object you've had for at least six months, describe it in your journal, and tell its story. Then reflect on its story in the context of your own life. Choose a relationship you have with someone – your spouse or one of your kids, parents, siblings, friends, coworkers or neighbors. Think about the story you share with that person; not just who each of you are, but who you are together and what happens between you. Describe the story of your relationship. Remember a particular room that you spent time in as a child. Describe it in as much detail as you can, and include people if there are any in the room when you think of it. Then note whatever feelings came up as you wrote about the room.

**Honor your story.** Use your journal as a place to get to know more about yourself and befriend yourself, remembering that your identity is rooted in the fact that God made you and loves you. Reflect on your name by writing it across the top of a journal page and recording the memories, feelings, and stories connected to your name. Consider what names God might use to describe you, and journal a prayer to God responding to those names. Notice when you've thought negatively about yourself, and start to write positively about yourself in your journal. Learn how to bless yourself by describing yourself in positive ways.

**Mine beneath the surface of your life.** Go deeper than just recording events in your journal. Aim to express your reactions to the events you experience, writing meaningful thoughts and feelings you have rather than just what's happened lately in your life. Pray about the various parts of your life – your family and friends, your work, your health, etc. – and ask God to show you what He would like you to reflect on more deeply in your journal. Once you've chosen a topic, free write about it for a while. Then draw a map of that area of your life, with words or pictures representing your experiences related to that area and how you think and feel about it. Notice how you may have changed what you believe about that area of your life over time, and write about those changes. Consider what actions your journal entries are urging you to take in response to what you've written about this area of your life: Maybe you feel compelled to apologize to someone,

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**Spirit-Body Healing: Using Your Mind's Eye to Unlock the Medicine Within**

***The First Book on Spiritual Healing Based on a Research Study at a Major University Healthcare Center***

***By Michael Samuels, M.D. and Mary Rockwood Lane, R.N., Ph.D.***

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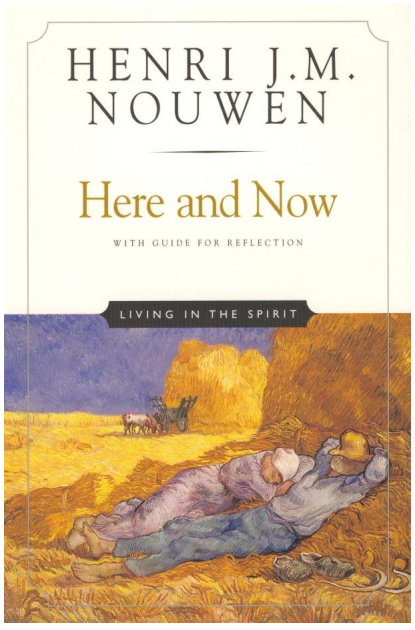
# *Here and Now*

## *Living in the Spirit*

**By Henri J.M. Nouwen**

**Discussion Questions for Nouwen Reading Groups**

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# Journal Prompts for the Liminal Space

by Heather Plett

## A. Liminal Space

*"Liminal space is a period in which something— social hierarchy, culture, belief, tradition, identity, etc.—has been dissolved and a new thing has not yet emerged to take its place. It's that period of uncertainty, ambiguity, restlessness, fear, discomfort, and anguish. It's the space between, when a trapeze artist lets go of one bar and doesn't yet know whether they will be able to catch the other bar." – Heather Plett, The Art of Holding Space: A Practice of Love, Liberation, and Leadership*

1. What is liminal in your life right now? What feels uncertain about your future?
2. How does liminal feel in your body? Move around as you consider the word and notice how your body holds it.
3. What have you let go of or moved away from?
4. What felt secure in the past but no longer feels secure?
5. What are you still clinging to from the past?
6. What are you happy to release from the past?
7. What are you grieving? How is grief living in your body?
8. Write a list of the emotions that have been emerging during this liminal space. (You can incorporate an art practice by assigning each emotion a colour and doing a finger painting with those colours.)
9. Are there relationships that will change as a result of this liminal space you're in? How do you feel about that?
10. Do you feel safe in this liminal space? Why or why not? What might help you feel safer?
11. One of my favourite mantras, which I try hard to embrace when I'm in liminal space, is "The outcome is not my responsibility." Say that mantra a few times to yourself and notice how it feels to say it. Write about how that feels.
12. Find a piece of music that represents liminal space. (Some of my favourites are Nothing Stays the Same, by Luke Sital-Singh; Carry On, by The Fortunate Ones; Change of Time, by Josh Ritter; Unsettled, by Justin Rutledge; and The Darkness, by Rose Cousins.) Listen to it and then write about the thoughts and feelings it evokes.
13. What is possible if you surrender to this moment?
14. What stories from the past might this liminal space be inviting you to let go of and/or rewrite?



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# Wheel of Life

The Watering Place

**ASSESS YOUR LIFE PART 1**

*Assess your level of fulfillment for each of these areas on a scale from 1 to 10 and shade the wheel accordingly.*

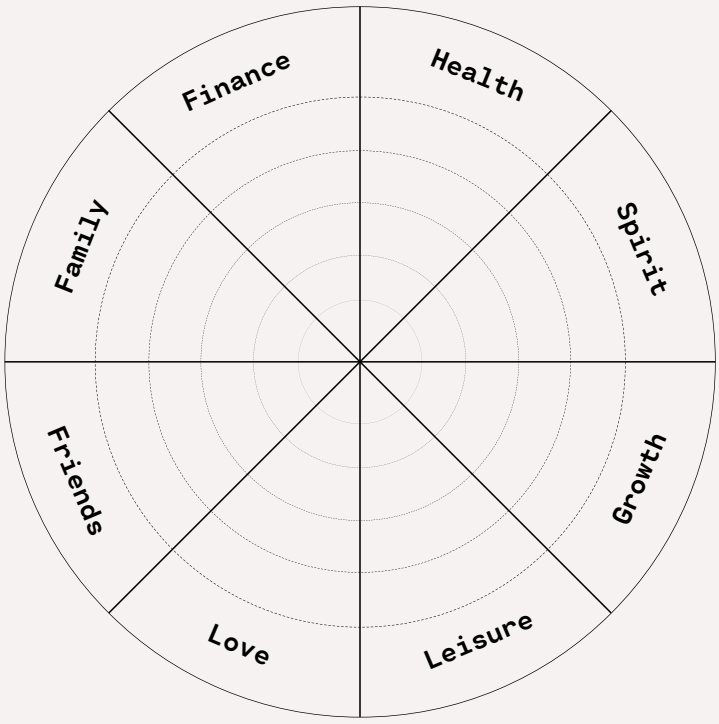


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**Table 1.** Dimensions of wellness

**Physical Dimension**
- Caring for your body to stay healthy now and in the future

**Intellectual Dimension**
- Growing intellectually, maintaining curiosity about all there is to learn, valuing lifelong learning, and responding positively to intellectual challenges
- Expanding knowledge and skills while discovering the potential for sharing your gifts with others

**Emotional Dimension**
- Understanding and respecting your feelings, values, and attitudes
- Appreciating the feelings of others
- Managing your emotions in a constructive way
- Feeling positive and enthusiastic about your life

**Social Dimension**
- Maintaining healthy relationships, enjoying being with others, developing friendships and intimate relations, caring about others, and letting others care about you
- Contributing to your community

**Spiritual Dimension**
- Finding purpose, value, and meaning in your life with or without organized religion
- Participating in activities that are consistent with your beliefs and values

**Vocational Dimension**
- Preparing for and participating in work that provides personal satisfaction and life enrichment that is consistent with your values, goals, and lifestyle
- Contributing your unique gifts, skills, and talents to work that is personally meaningful and rewarding

**Financial Dimension**
- Managing your resources to live within your means, making informed financial decisions and investments, setting realistic goals, and preparing for short-term and long-term needs or emergencies
- Being aware that everyone's financial values, needs, and circumstances are unique

**Environmental Dimension**
- Understanding how your social, natural, and built environments affect your health and well-being
- Being aware of the unstable state of the earth and the effects of your daily habits on the physical environment
- Demonstrating commitment to a healthy planet

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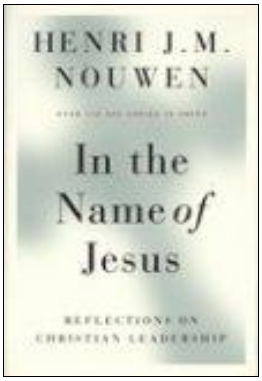
# *In the Name of Jesus*

By Henri J.M. Nouwen

**Reflection Questions for Nouwen Reading Groups**

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**Resisting the Demon of Busyness**

Janet Ruffing

Classic Christian sources often identify, with an uncanny sense of spiritual wisdom, the "demons" which possess those who would walk a spiritual path and which subtly subvert our good intentions. Today, we prefer to call them personal or cultural compulsions or addictions. The fourth century desert writer Evagrius describes eight such demons or passionate thoughts which afflict the solitary desert dweller. They are none other than the seven capital sins plus one. These, when traced phenomenologically to their root manifestations, simply suggest how we might be tempted. In Evagrius's historical context and milieu, the most serious demon was "acedia."-- a spirit of boredom, restlessness, and deep depression which tempted the solitary to abandon the contemplative life altogether.(1) The fiercest passion, however, was seen as anger which led to either a constant state of irritation or, when inverted, to a paranoid depression.(2)

John of the Cross described with great psychological accuracy temptations which may last a long time, but which eventually lead to integration and wholeness. He identified three spirits which create severe disequilibrium in those who pursue a contemplative path. They are the spirit of fornication, the spirit of blasphemy, and the spirit of dizziness. The first one is an upsurge of unintegrated sexual passion from the unconscious. The second is an anger which is focused directly at God. The spirit of dizziness, however, is another matter. It is a spirit of confusion, restlessness, and poor judgment. People who have grown accustomed to relying on their good sense and judgment suddenly find themselves spun around, lacking equilibrium and balance.(3) John tells us that all of these unpleasant visitations are good news because they indicate that God is preparing such people thus afflicted for total transformation.

The Fourth Demon

I would like to suggest that all of us, lay and ordained alike, in our North American, contemporary lifestyles must contend with a fourth demon, unnamed in these classical texts: the demon of busyness. Perhaps

this demon of busyness is closely related to John's spirit of dizziness. Some years ago I was asked to give a retreat to a group of teachers. When they were asked what they wanted from this one-day retreat, almost every single one of them mentioned something about how their busyness interfered with their relationship with God. No one, of course, questioned whether or not they had to be this busy.

These statements had an all too familiar ring to me. I was not unacquainted with the demon of busyness myself. I alternately resist and surrender to this demon. In our times, we prefer to talk more about compulsions than about demons. We recognize that many of the so-called demons are nothing other than parts of ourselves. We assume responsibility for them as complexes, unconscious impulses, addictions, or compulsions. This particular demon, however, is more than a private, cultural creation. Resisting its domination and its numbing and deadening effects requires both consciousness and ascetical choices many of us would prefer not to make. If we should succeed in making them, I can guarantee they will go unrewarded in both the secular and religious cultures in which we participate.

North American Addiction

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# Spiritual Gifts Test

God has blessed each believer with Spiritual Gifts. Do you know what Spiritual Gifts God has given you? This Spiritual Gifts Test will help you determine what Spiritual Gift(s) and/or Special Talent(s) God has given you. The test evaluates 28 Gifts and Talents. Do NOT look ahead to see what these Gifts and Talents are because that will influence your results!

Instructions:

This Spiritual Gifts Test consists of 140 statements (pages 2-5) that you are to respond to by entering in a number for each on the Analysis Sheet (page 7). Depending on how you feel about each statement, enter a number between 1 and 10 where 1 means that the statement does not describe you at all and 10 means that the statement describes you perfectly.

This test is designed for Christians. If you have been a Christian for at least a few years, you should use your personal experiences as the basis for your Responses. If you consider yourself to be a new Christian, then your Responses should be based on how well each statement describes the desire of your heart (even if you have not yet done what the statement talks about).

Please keep in mind that this test was written by people, not by God, and as such it is certainly imperfect. It should be used as a starting place to begin to discover how God has gifted you, but not as an absolute indicator. The test may not always indicate your true Spiritual Gift(s). It is just one tool in what should be a life-long search for how God has blessed you so you can bless others.

**Read this VERY CAREFULLY!**

1. Before you start the test, find the Analysis Sheet (page 7) and fold it along the gray line that runs down the middle of the sheet. Fold it so that you can see the 140 numbered boxes, but cannot see the names of the Spiritual Gifts and Talents.
2. Place the five Test pages (pages 2-6) on top of the folded Analysis Sheet so that you can see the Response 1-28 column.
3. As you take the Test, enter a Response (number from 1 to 10 indicating how well the statement describes you) in each of the pre-numbered boxes.
4. After entering your Responses in the boxes numbered 1-28, flip to the second Test page and position it over the Analysis Sheet so that it covers up the column of Responses you just entered.
5. Now enter your Responses for this page of the test.
6. Continue this process for all five Test pages. The test will take about an hour to complete.

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# Questions I Ask Myself for Self Healing

It is important to realize that these questions are not to engender guilt. Instead, they are to help us identify the role of the mind in the bodily system we are now experiencing. If we can identify the role our minds play along with our power to create symptoms, we can begin to use the same power to heal. Blaming the victim, whether another or yourself, is to create illness and perpetuate victimization. To be curious about how your mind has contributed to your symptoms is a step toward embracing your innate power to bring about healing your mindbody.

Let yourself be irrational as well as rational in answering. Think of any possible purpose your symptom, which could bring any kind of "benefit" to you. The "benefit" might be an irrational one more like what a small child might conclude.

**Question 1:**
**Why might I need this particular symptom right now?_____**
**_____**

**Question 2:**
**What would it get for me?_____**
**_____**

**Question 3:**
**What would it get me out of doing?_____**
**_____**

**Question 4:**
**What cultural or family belief system might it be expressing and manifesting?_____**
**_____**

**Question 5:**
**What emotion might it be expressing for me? What could an emotion be expressing in this particular part of my body- an emotion which has not been conscious to me?_____**
**_____**

**Question 6:**
**What is my body expressing metaphorically with this symptom?_____**
**_____**

**Question 7:**
**Are there uncleared recent or cumulative childhood traumas that could have triggered this symptom?_____**
**_____**

## Henry Grayson, Ph.D.

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# Music Therapy and Considerations of Spirituality: An Integrative Review

Kate Sidor

Music Therapy, University of Dayton

MUS 375: Research in Music Therapy

Professor Courtney Belt

5 May 2022

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# You Can Heal Your Life

Louise L. Hay

HAY HOUSE
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The Emergence of Mission and Missiology

# Empowering Creativity
## A Look at How We Discover and Recover Our Creative Selves

*by Chong H. Kim*

*This paper was presented at the ONEBAND conference in Korea in July, 2009, and then again at the Asian Mission Leaders Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in October, 2009. It has been further revised into this article.*

*Chong Kim founded the Korean American Center for World Mission, an organization affiliated with the U.S. Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California in 1989 and served as its director from 1991 to 2003. In 2004, he founded and is currently directing Band Barnabas, a sending structure focusing on equipping and sending biculturals to work among the least likely to be reached people groups in Asia. He is also directing the Strategy Division at the U.S. Center for World Mission.*

### *Introduction*

A commitment to lifelong learning assumes that we will always continue to ask questions and discover answers that we sometimes don't expect. This commitment is crucial because the world we live in is constantly changing, requiring us to continually learn (and unlearn); if there's one thing we need to learn today, it's creativity. More specifically, it is about how we empower creativity. But in order for us to empower creativity, we first need to understand the need for it.

Creativity connects topics and issues that don't initially seem to be related, a skill that in the modern age has often been associated with highly gifted artists, musicians, actors, and dancers. But in other disciplines of life creativity has often seemed out of place.

In one of these disciplines[1], missions, empowering creativity has been gravely lacking. It is one thing to say that creativity on the part of carriers of the gospel has provided spurts of innovation to help them get into hard places to share the gospel. It is another thing to ponder what carriers of the gospel have done to empower creativity on the part of the people they went to reach.

Rather than promote and empower creativity, gospel carriers or outsiders have generally discouraged and even squelched the initiative of those people who might have burst into the open to express themselves in their own cultural contexts. Instead, they became used to looking over their shoulders to see if they were doing "right" in the eyes of the outside gospel carriers.

Perhaps a more fundamental problem is that gospel carriers are generally not being creative, or, their creativity is not being put to use on the field. We have been trained to have "black and white"[2] answers to most complex theological and missiological questions. We were taught answers, but without our having asked the complex and difficult questions that precede supposed answers. Furthermore, we were taught to communicate those answers without considering the questions that arise in the field. We've grown accustomed to



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YOU CAN
CREATE AN
*exceptional*
LIFE

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# TANGLE GUIDE

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# David Grove's Metaphors for Healing

David Pincus
*Chapman University*, pincus@chapman.edu

Anees A. Sheikh
*Marquette University*

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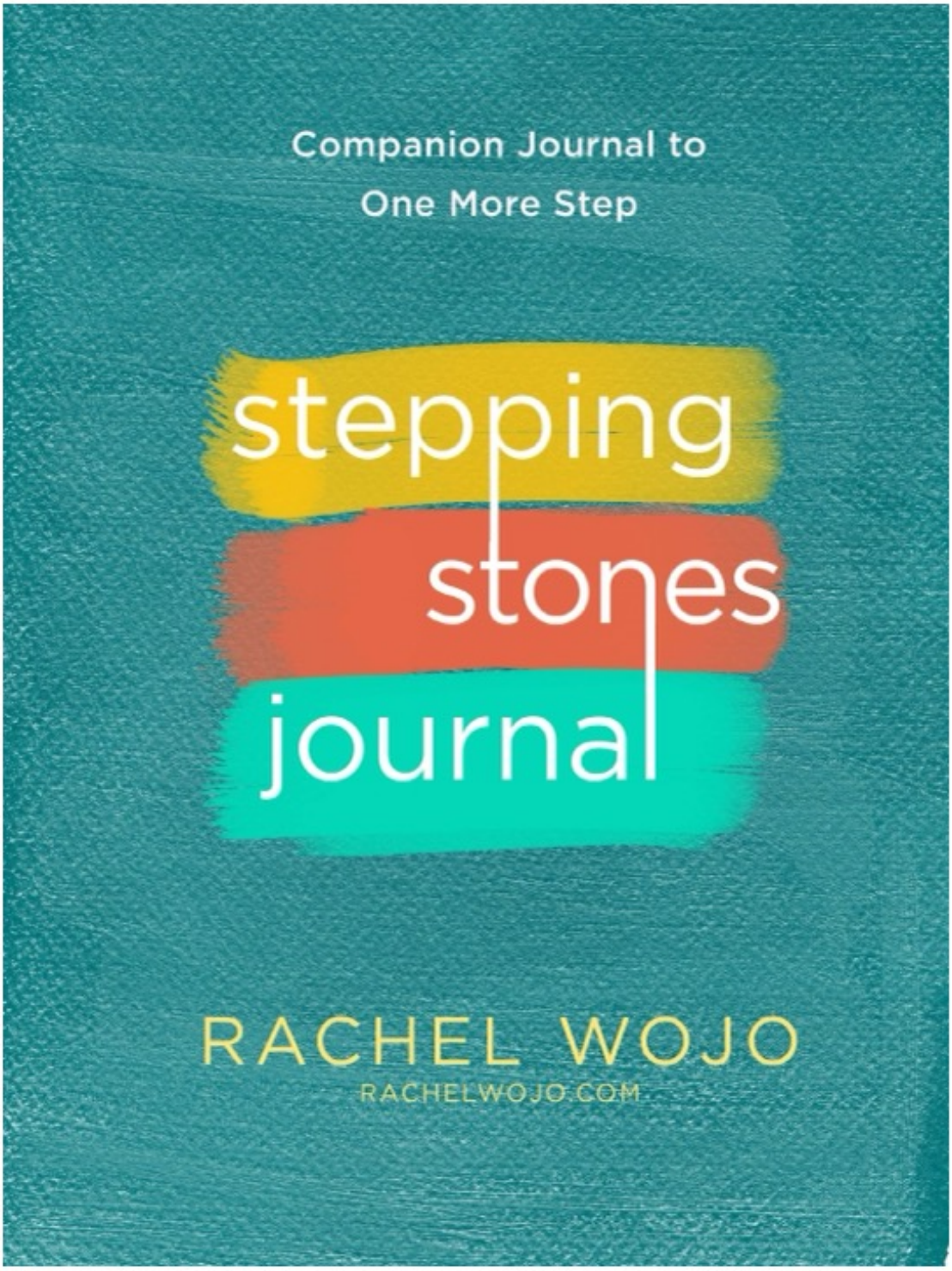


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presents

# The Keys To The Sanctuary:

*A peaceful journey inward to refuel and reconnect*

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SPIRITUAL LIFE - SUMMER 1995

# Resisting the Demon Of Busyness

*Janet Ruffing*

CLASSIC CHRISTIAN SOURCES often identify, with an uncanny sense of spiritual wisdom, the "demons" which possess those who would walk a spiritual path and which subtly subvert our good intentions. Today, we prefer to call them personal or cultural compulsions or addictions. The fourth century desert writer Evagrius describes eight such demons or passionate thoughts which afflict the solitary desert dweller. They are none other than the seven capital sins plus one. These, when traced phenomenologically to their root manifestations, simply suggest how we might be tempted. In Evagrius's historical context and milieu, the most serious demon was *acedia*, a spirit of boredom, restlessness, and deep depression which tempted the solitary to abandon the contemplative life altogether.[1] The fiercest passion, however, was seen as anger which led to either a constant state of irritation or, when inverted, to a paranoid depression.[2]

John of the Cross described with great psychological accuracy temptations which may last a long time, but which eventually lead to integration and wholeness. He identifies three spirits which create severe disequilibrium in those who pursue a contemplative path. They are the spirit of fornication, the spirit of blasphemy, and the spirit of dizziness. The first one is an upsurge of unintegrated sexual passion from the unconscious. The second is an anger which is focused directly at God. The spirit of dizziness, however, is another matter. It is a spirit of confusion, restlessness, and poor judgment. People who have grown accustomed to relying on their good sense and judgment suddenly find themselves spun around, lacking equilibrium and balance.[3] John tells us that all of these unpleasant visitations are good news because they indicate that God is preparing such people thus afflicted for total transformation.

**The Fourth Demon**

I would like to suggest that all of us, lay or religious alike, in our North American, contemporary lifestyles must contend with a fourth demon, unnamed in these classical texts: the demon of busyness. Perhaps this demon of busyness is closely related to John's spirit of dizziness. Some years ago I was asked to give a retreat to a group of teachers. When they were asked what they wanted from this one-day retreat, almost every single one of them mentioned something about how their busyness interfered with their relationship with God. No one, of course, questioned whether or not they had to be this busy.

These statements had an all too familiar ring to me. I was not unacquainted with the demon of busyness myself. I alternately resist and surrender to this demon. In our times, we prefer to talk more about compulsions than about demons. We recognize that many of the so called demons are nothing other than parts of ourselves. We assume responsibility for them as complexes, unconscious impulses, addictions, or compulsions. This particular demon, however, is more than a private, personal, psychological vulnerability. This demon is at least equally a cultural creation. Resisting its domination and its numbing and deadening effects requires both consciousness and ascetical choices many of us would prefer not to make. If we should succeed



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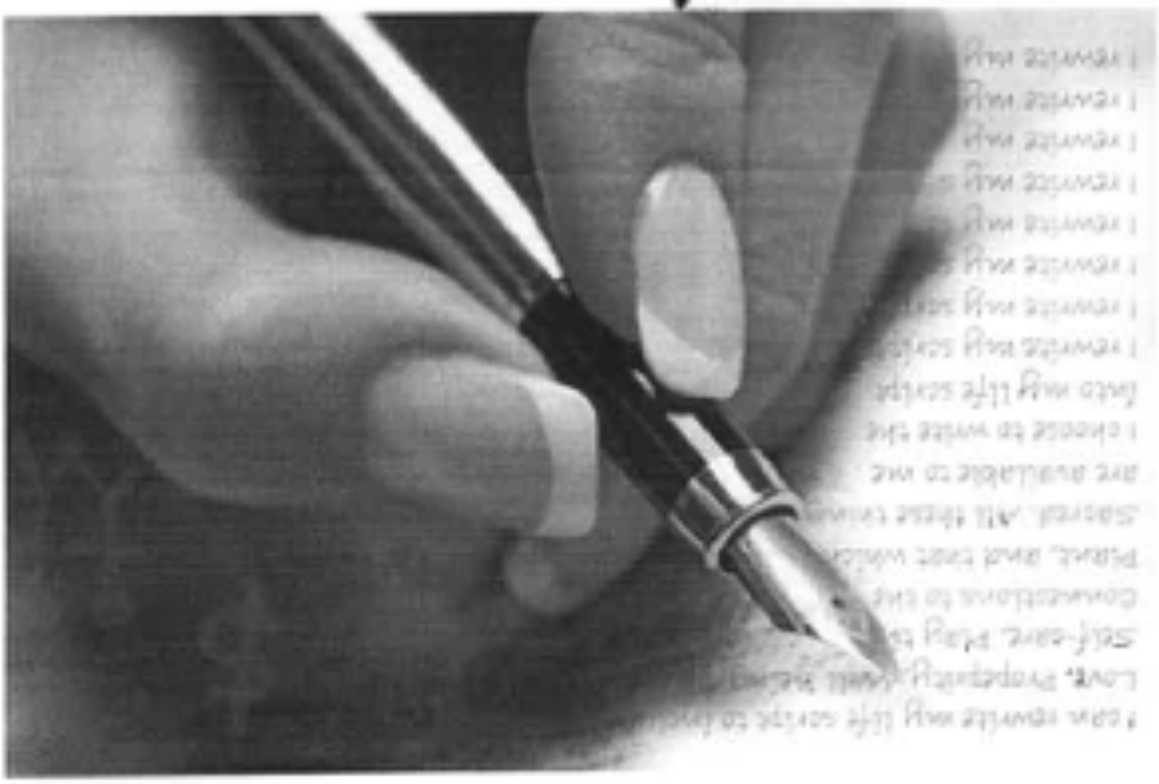
# Rewrite Your Life Stories



## Complimentary Course

by

Robin Harris, DesignerLife

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The Watering Place

WORSHIP • ACTIVATION • TRANSFORMATION • ENCOUNTER • RESTORATION

## WATERING SESSIONS

# WATERING SESSIONS

# 10 Elements of Self-Care

1. I only engage in activities that reflect what matters to me.
2. I take all of my vacation time every year.
3. I make a heart-to-heart connection daily with someone I care about.
4. I honor my body's need for rest.
5. I have fun at least once a week.
6. I eat at regular intervals and a slow pace.
7. I find enjoyable ways to exercise at least three times per week.
8. I do not allow technology to consume my time, but use it to maximize my time.
9. I say no to activities that do not pass my "personal priority test."
   a.I have a personal priority test and can articulate it.
   b.If you do not have one, take time to create it.
   We will not always hit every goal, but we are 100% sure to miss the goals we do not have.
10. I listen to my inner voice when making decisions.

## Watering:

Please take a look at the ten elements of self-care above.
Which element most needs your attention?
What specifically do you need to do differently?
How could you go about incorporating this change into your life?
What support will you need?
When will you begin?
Ask God to give you clarity as you consider these questions.
**Holy Spirit is waiting to assist.**

## Continuing The Journey

**Take note of every activity you engaged in this past week.**
Look at them critically and ask yourself, "What is the purpose of this?"
If you cannot satisfactorily answer the question, consider the possibility of eliminating it from your life. It doesn't have to be eliminated immediately but be open to the possibility that, if it doesn't serve a meaningful purpose, it isn't worthy of your time.

## One-Minute Meditation

Self-care is a meaningful way I honor God.

## Acronym for S.P.A.C.E. with five tips

**S = Safety.** Feeling safe is a vital aspect of creating and holding impeccable space. We can enhance a feeling of safety by using nonjudgment, securing confidentiality, ensuring inclusivity, being mindful of cultural needs, avoid rushing, and choosing a neutral physical location. When we don't feel safe, space may become occupied with fight, flight, freeze responses.

**P = Presence.** We first have to be fully present in our body in order to be fully present for another. By grounding, bringing awareness to our being, setting distractions aside, and using breath, we stay present for another. Being present also involves noticing what's ours and what's not. While we can effectively listen and hold a solid intention to allow for others to process, we must commit to not taking on the energy of the other person's situation.

**A = Accept.** We can create an accepting space by actively listening, refraining from judgment, using compassion, and letting things simply be. We can also remember when we respond: it's not about what we say, it's how we say it. If and when we're prompted to provide feedback, it's essential to use an accepting and loving tone—one that says, "No matter what you say, I accept you, love you, and I am here to listen."

**C = Challenges.** Challenges and problems are sure to arise, and we don't have to fix or correct them. When obstacles appear, and we practice being okay with "not being okay," we can hold excellent space. Allowing the challenges to be sends the message we are committed to sitting through the hard stuff, which provides a safe space for others to share and process.

**E = Empty.** Space defined is a continuous area free, available, or unoccupied. It's empty. We can create a safe space by allowing emptiness to be, without needing to fill it. Silence, breath, eye contact, and resisting the need to change anything are all a part of holding a safe space.

https://www.elephantjournal.com/2021/08/holding-space-5-harrison-owen-quotes-that-teach-us-5-takeaway-tips-to-hold-impeccable-space/(Ballard n.d.)

## Breath Prayer Experience

The Hebrew word for Spirit is Ruach,
Which means breath.
God breathes in us – we live.
Even speaking the word, ru-ACH,
causes the air to move.

Become aware of your breath...
Each time you breathe, realize that the
Spirit moves within you...
Enlivening you, awakening you to life.
Focus your awareness on your breathing...
Breathing in and out slowly...
Welcoming the Spirit's presence
within you...
Opening to God's presence and
power within

Continue breathing deeply and slowly,
Conscious of Spirit living in you,
Dwelling in your body,
Dwelling in your mind,
Dwelling in your spirit.
Open yourself to images, hopes,
Messages Spirit has for you.

**Pray one of these mantras:**
Spirit, embrace me.
Spirit, possess me.
(Create your own mantra)

As you repeat your prayer,
awaken more deeply to the love,
the strength, to the courage,
to the compassion of God within you.

Repeat for several minutes.

## Breath Prayer Experience

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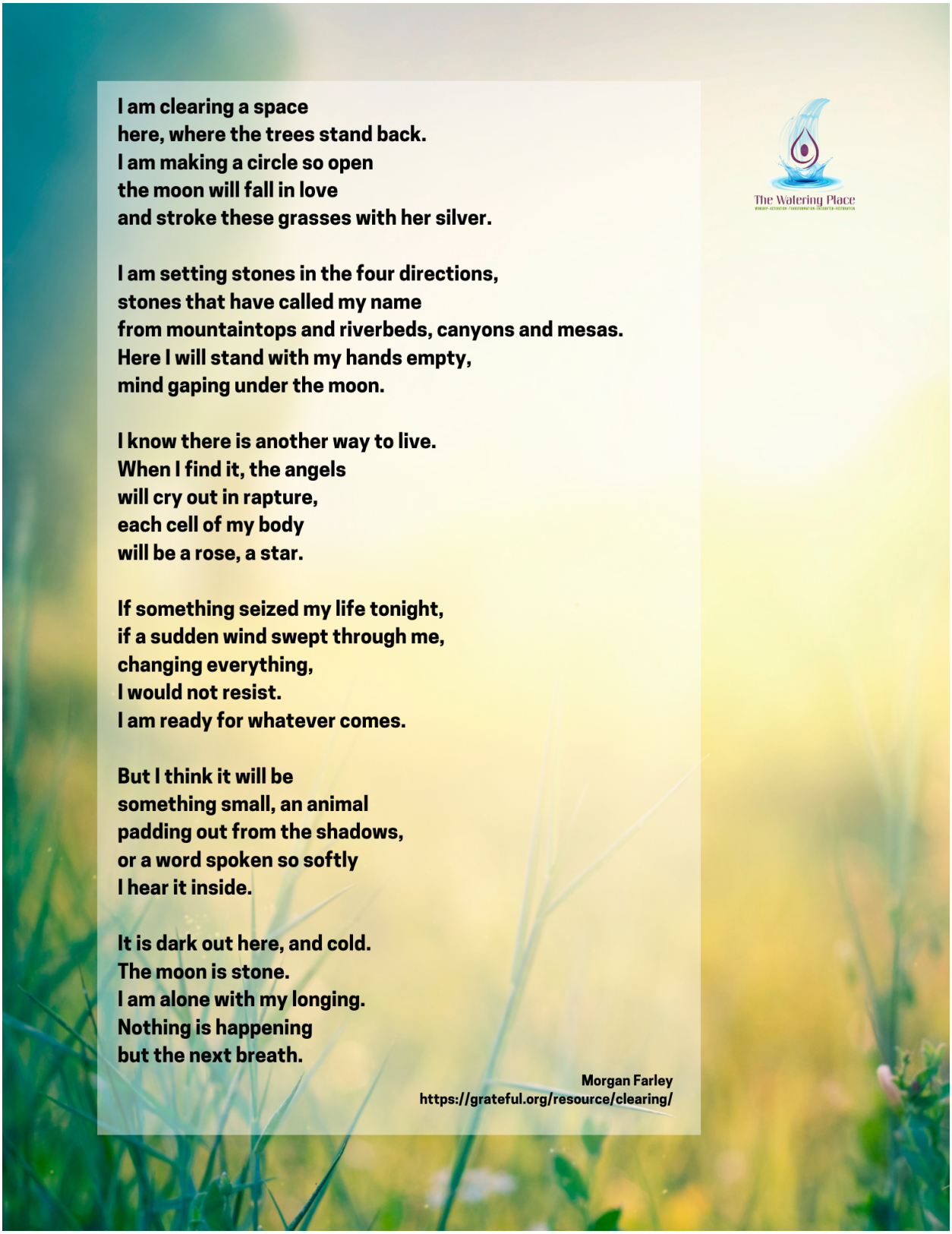
I am clearing a space
here, where the trees stand back.
I am making a circle so open
the moon will fall in love
and stroke these grasses with her silver.
I am setting stones in the four directions,
stones that have called my name
from mountaintops and riverbeds, canyons and mesas.
Here I will stand with my hands empty,
mind gaping under the moon.
I know there is another way to live.
When I find it, the angels
will cry out in rapture,
each cell of my body
will be a rose, a star.
If something seized my life tonight,
if a sudden wind swept through me,
changing everything,
I would not resist.
I am ready for whatever comes.
But I think it will be
something small, an animal
padding out from the shadows,
or a word spoken so softly
I hear it inside.
It is dark out here, and cold.
The moon is stone.
I am alone with my longing.
Nothing is happening
but the next breath.
Morgan Farley
https://grateful.org/resource/clearing/
The Watering Place

## Do Less: Of Everything

But Do Less means much more than being productive. It goes to the heart of everything we do, of our society. Do Less is nothing less than a two-word manifesto for living.

**Here's how the two-word manifesto of "Do Less" can change everything:**

1. **Do Less buying.** If you spend less, shop less, acquire less, then you will own less, need less, get into less debt, be in better financial shape, have less clutter, and have more time for things that are truly important.

2. **Do Less busy-work.** Instead of running around doing lots of little things, slow down. Do Less. Live a calmer, more peaceful life. Be content to sit, to do nothing. Relax a little. Smile and be happy.

3. **Do Less managing.** If you are in a position of authority over others, whether it's as a manager, executive, or parent ... the less you do the better. Many people over-manage, or over-parent. This gives their employees, or children, very little freedom, room for creativity, room to learn on their own, to succeed and fail. The less you do, the more others will figure out how to do things. Do little things to guide and teach, but for the most part, back off and let them be.

4. **Do Less communicating.** Less talking, less yelling, less arguing, less emails and IM and Twittering, less phone calling. While I think communication is extremely important, and should be one of the keys to any relationship, I also think we do it too much. Especially as most of it becomes nothing but jabbering at each other, with very little actual listening. It is noise. Let silence into your life. Let stillness pervade our minds. When you do communicate, make it count, make it sincere, and more than you talk, listen. Make every email count. Only IM when it's necessary. Spend less time on the phone and Twitter and Blackberry and iPhone, and more time with humans, more time with yourself, more time in the present.

5. **Do Less complaining and criticizing.** I won't rant about how these two things can drag down you and those around you ... but instead will say that if you did less of these two things, your life would be better. And we all do them — fess up! I do, and I try to do less of it. Instead, do more kindness, compassion, understanding, accepting, loving.

6. **Do Less planning** and worrying and future thinking. Spend more time in the moment. We worry too much, and it does us no good. We think about things that haven't happened, instead of what's happening now (and yes, I know that's the name of an old sitcom). And while some planning is necessary, too much of it is a waste of time —

there's no way to predict the future, and trying to control every little thing that's going to happen is futile. Learn to go with the flow, look for opportunities, find the natural path of things, and do what is needed in the moment. You can't control outcomes, but if you learn to work more fluidly (instead of rigidly following plans), you can get to outcomes that are good.

**7. Do Less judging and expecting.** Acceptance is something I'm trying to learn to do more. And that means I need to be less judgmental, and stop having expectations from everything and everybody. If you have no expectations, and don't judge things, you can accept them. And acceptance leads to peace, leads to happiness. So when you find yourself judging, think "Do Less Judging". When you find yourself expecting someone to be a certain way, think "Do Less Expectations". People won't disappoint you that way, because you'll learn to accept them as they are, and learn that they are already perfect, as they are.

**"Be Content with what you have; rejoice in the way things are. When you realize there is nothing lacking, the whole world belongs to you." - Lao Tzu**

## How to Do Less

If you are sold on the two-word manifesto — Do Less — you might be saying to yourself, "Self, that sounds good, but how exactly do I go about doing less?" It's simple:

**1. Do Less.** Yes, it really is that simple. Do Less. Take how much you usually do, and Do Less than that. If you're smart, you'll naturally choose the more essential things to do, but it's possible that you won't, and you'll just choose whatever is easy or convenient or fun. That's OK. Go with that. Eventually you'll probably have to do the important stuff, because it probably has to be done sometime. Or maybe you won't, and you'll end up getting nothing done. Then you'll think to yourself, "Self, there has to be a better way. Either I have to go back to doing more, or I have to choose more wisely in what I do."

**2. Then Do Even Less.** If you followed the first step, and you're now doing less than you were before, congratulate yourself! Pat yourself on the back! Celebrate by going to take a nap. Now, when you're ready to get started again, try to do even less than you were doing in Step 1 above. Pare some of your actions down. Look for more fat to trim. See if some things really aren't as necessary as you thought they were. Pass some things on to others, automate other things, delay on still others, and stop

doing still others by calling up someone or emailing them and explaining, “I’m sorry, I just can’t do as much as I originally planned.” Now you’re doing less than before!

**Repeat.** Keep doing less until you’re doing almost nothing. When you’ve reached that point, congratulations! You’re a master. When you can get by with doing nothing at all, you’ve reached Nirvana and enlightenment and you should really be teaching me instead of the other way around. Feel free to come write a guest post for Zen Habits when you’ve reached this state!

**Some other ideas to consider when learning to Do Less:**

• **Go with the flow.** Imagine the effort required to swim upstream compared to moving with the flow of a river. If you go with the flow of things, rather than against them, you will naturally do less, and with less effort.

• **Don’t force things.** A common mistake — trying to hard, forcing something that doesn’t want to be forced, forcing people to do things they don’t want to do. A lot of effort, action, and time is wasted. Instead, find a smoother way — think of water, which flows around things rather than trying to force its way through them.

• **Find the pressure points.** In martial arts, instead of using maximum force, you are wise to find the points in the body where less force can be used to greater effect, whether that’s to cause pain or imbalance or some other effect. Well, I don’t advocate finding pain, but the idea of pressure points is a good one: if you can find the little spots where a little action can change everything, can go a long way, you have mastered the Do Less philosophy.

• **Let others do.** Give others the room and freedom to move, to create, to invent, to learn, to work, to do, on their own. Less time, effort and action spent trying to control others means that you do less, but let others make things happen. It means letting go of control, but that’s a good thing. Other people have creativity, imagination, dedication, good ideas too.

• **Let things happen.** Often our actions interfere with events that would happen without our actions. In other words, if we took no action, things would happen without us. Sometimes it’s better to let things happen. Step back, don’t act, things will happen without us.

**“Doing nothing to disturb the spontaneous flow of things.” – Lao Tzu**
**Leo Babuta**

## An excerpt on Silence

## Watering Space

I experience the beauty of silence.
In silence, I find peace. I learn to listen.
I wait for the voice of God.
My wounds are healed.
I become again my true self.
I see myself as I am – a sinner,
yes, but beloved by God
as a son and a friend.
In silence, I taste the banquet of heaven.
I learn to breathe again,
and breathing becomes significant.
The world falls away,
with all its noise and idolatry.
Nature reveals herself because
I am reduced to nothing.
Then in that stillness,
I hear creation praising God,
and slowly, gently,
without even knowing it, I join in.
Life becomes a marvelous celebration,
a great dance, a festival of peace.
All worries, all fears, all anxieties,
all violence fade away,
and I enter the solitude of God.
What a beautiful gift.
We are all created for this peace.
We are summoned to enter the house of God
where the great celebration is taking place.
The path to this feast is uphill
and taken in silence."

*John Dear*
*From The Sound of Listening: A Retreat Journal from Thomas Merton's Hermitage (2006)*

*Listening to the Spirit in silent, loving attentiveness, enables us to let go of our preconceptions and over-identification with the events of daily life, which tends to dominate our emotional reactions rather than invite our free response.*
*St. Therese of Lisieux*

**Don't park in the fire lane.**
**The fire lane is for fast-moving vehicles.**
**We are trying to slow down**
**so we have time and space to see,**
**hear, and respond to**
**all parts of our lives.**

## Watering:

**In what ways have you been guilty of parking in the fast lane instead of driving in a slower-moving lane?**

**What impact does parking in the fire lane of your thoughts, heart, or spirit have on you?**

**In what other ways does this metaphor speak to you?**

## Holding Space:

- Sit in two rows with chairs facing each other.
- Discuss one of your responses with the person across from you.
- When the bell rings, each person moves to the chair on your right. If you are in the end chair, move to the front of the line. Continue until the session is called.

## Half life

We walk through half our life
as if it were a fever dream
barely touching the ground
our eyes half open
our heart half closed.
Not half knowing who we are
we watch the ghost of us drift
from room to room
through friends and lovers
never quite as real as advertised.
Not saying half we mean
or meaning half we say
we dream ourselves
from birth to birth
seeking some true self.
Until the fever breaks
and the heart can not abide
a moment longer
as the rest of us awakens,
summoned from the dream,
not half caring for anything but love.

Stephen Levine 2007

# Reflect

## Half life

We walk through half our life
as if it were a fever dream
barely touching the ground
our eyes half open
our heart half closed.
Not half knowing who we are
we watch the ghost of us drift
from room to room
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Stephen Levine 2007

# Reflect

## Process:

1. Sit with your eyes closed and listen to *Holding Space* written and performed by Crys Matthews
2. As you listen for the second time, circle any words or phrases that capture your attention. Jot thoughts or images in the margins. Do not censor your thoughts. Allow them to flow freely as you allow the music to flow over and in you.
3. Sit for a moment with your thoughts in silence.

**Holding Space**

Crys Matthews
https://www.reverbnation.com/crysmatthews/song/23443654-holding-space

It ain't over til it's over,
not even when this August comes and goes
and I'm waving over my shoulder.
40 years are said and done,
and truly we were the lucky ones.
And as long as I've got the memories
I can keep each of you with me
from the sisters up in Baltimore
to way down south in Ecuador
And across oceans, across the seas
I'll be holding space for you like it
was held for me.

It takes way more than one locked gate
to make a 40-year legacy dissipate
and if it runs as deep as this one does
it's in our bones, it's in our blood.
Wooo sisters, don't you cry.
This is just so long for now.
This is not goodbye.

Well it ain't over til it's over,
not even when those gates are
closed for good and I'm
crying on your shoulders.
In every state in this great land
you'll find sweet memories of Michigan
like two strangers holding hands singing
"Amazon womyn gonna rise again"
like the Gaia girls, the silver ferns,
the drum songs, the singing,
and the lessons learned.
When womyn gather be it few or many
somebody's holding space for you
like it was held for me.

It takes way more than one locked gate
to make a 40-year legacy dissipate
and if it runs as deep as this one does
it's in our bones, it's in our blood.
Wooo sisters, don't you cry.
This is just so long for now.
This is not goodbye.

## Watering

You are invited to reflect on one or all of the following questions. If others come to mind, feel free to reflect on those instead. Write any thoughts, actions, revelations, or prayers that come to mind.

- What images come to mind as you read the lyrics?
- In what ways do the lyrics and the performance match or disconnect?
- Where do you see yourself in this song?
- Does anyone or a situation come to mind as you reflect on the song?

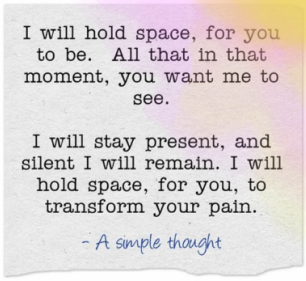
## Holding Space:

Using any craft or journaling materials, think of ways you might express what it means to hold space for yourself and others. Consider writing a poem, create a collage, journal, creating a play list of other songs that remind you to actively hold space. You are a creative being.... so.... create. Judgments are not allowed!

## Wading In:

Share your creations with the sister circle. Remember, this is a safe space and we applaud and encourage all efforts.

## Watering Session Closure:



## Making the Invisible Visible
## Donna M. Cox

If you've followed my writings, you already know I am willing to be transparent, to open myself to others' scrutiny. I told God years ago that I did not want to wear a mask. I realized that I had worn a mask most of my adult life. I liked the image my mask presented. From all indications, I had it together. I lived a good life; I had a wonderful family – what more could a girl want, right? I wore the mask of the wife and mother of a picture-perfect family: educated mother and father, boy, girl and a dog or two. When we went to restaurants, strangers walked over to tell us how beautiful our family was. My mask smiled, and I patted myself on the back. We moved to Ohio to follow my dream of teaching college, and my husband went back to graduate school. The mask remained firmly in place. In fact, it became decorated by my new position. In that first year, in this new place, with strangers on every side, the mask began to slip. There were a few meltdowns, but at the end of each, the mask was put firmly back into place.

Eventually, a series of events forced the removal of the mask, and I vowed never to hide behind one again. What I did not realize thirty-some years ago is that the mask was but one part of the armor I used to protect myself.

Let me bring this a bit closer. I had something of a meltdown one morning with our eight-year-old. I'd worked hard on a second book in the Hezekiah Loves Music series. This book was quite different from the first and I was really excited about it. I'd had a few people, including children, read the book, and the feedback was tremendous. One lovely child told me it was among her favorite books. I had been trying to get the subject of the book to read it. Beyond working with me on the included music, he seemed to have little interest. That just did not go over too well with me that morning. One thing led to another, and we were both nearly in tears.

After putting him on the bus I began to question why his seeming disinterest should bother me so. He was only eight, after all. The discovery may be surprising to those who know me but – deep breath – here it is. For much of my children's lives, I felt invisible. Ok, I said it, and the world is still revolving. We traveled the world together; we spent quality AND quantity time together as a family. Yet, I often felt separate from the inner circle the kids shared with their Dad. The fact that I was the photographer on most of our adventures means I am in very few family pictures. This realization still brings tears to my eyes if I dwell on it too

much. This led to the understanding that my sense of invisibility did not start when my darling babies were born or even when I got married. No, it's been a quiet demanding, freeloading visitor all my life. It's gone with me everywhere I've gone. It's attended every celebration. It's patted me on the back at every heartache.

Revelation is a good thing, but only if it is useful. So, my prayer that morning was about how to circle the issue of invisibility and examine it from all angles. I wanted to know how to shake its hand and bid it a forever farewell. In other words, I wanted to know how to heal the places that contributed to feelings of invisibility.

Healing is not an easy road to travel. It is certainly not for the cowardly. It requires a willingness to strip away layers of protective armor. When we are wounded in any way, the body has an incredible capacity to send defenses to that place. That is easy to see in the physical but is much more difficult in the emotional. Feelings of abandonment, insecurity, fear, or loss set the body's natural defense system in motion. When we do not process these emotions, when things continue to pile up, what was intended to be a short-term response – let's call it a sheer layer of protective armor – becomes a hardened prison that thwarts growth and health.

To access those things buried beneath is not a passive endeavor. Some will need to be chipped away, bit by bit. As you chip, you will feel pieces of you pulled away, too. It hurts!! This is where we often give up. I mean, we've all read the sign 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it.' There have many times when it did not take much for me to declare a thing 'good enough.' The problem with living beneath armor is that while your conscious self might not know something is wrong, the subconscious does and demands attention. This creates inner dissonance and feelings of unrest and dis-ease.... which often leads to physical disease. Yes, chipping away costs something but the beauty is God created the body – physically and emotionally - to renew itself. What feels like the pain of death truly is but a 'light affliction' in the scheme of things. It's like giving birth. Those babies we love cause serious pain yet most of us would do it all again just for the joy of holding that precious one in our arms. Likewise, giving birth to the whole, healthy person God created you to be will require a sacrifice of pain. But when it's done you will come forth as pure gold.

Some things need to be chipped away. Others must be soaked away. When a wound is covered by gauze seeped in caked on, dried blood, it must soak before it can be, oh so gently, peeled back. Removing armor from wounds that have been opened and reopened for years is perhaps the most difficult process of the

two. The process of soaking is one of vulnerability and is counterintuitive for people who are accustomed to their armor. Heck, some of us LOVE our armor!

Although it sounds passive, it is not. Soaking calls you to let go of the familiar. It requires you to allow yourself – heart, mind, spirit and wounded places – to be covered by the ointment of the Holy Spirit. It means acknowledging that you have wounds you simply cannot reach by your own works. It means partnering with someone who can help you get beneath the covering.

In this place of total submission, the healing balm of the Spirit gently covers the armored places. And, like a loving Mother, the Holy Spirit very carefully begins to reveal – inch by inch, issue by issue, pain by pain – the brokenness, heartaches, fears, tears, memories – hidden beneath. Like a child, you open, first one eye, then both to take ever-lengthening looks at what is being revealed. And as you are emotionally ready, you lay aside these weights.

It is crucial to know that the Holy Spirit can work anywhere. So your soaking may have to occur in the office of a mental health professional. Yes, God is capable of zapping you, waving one hand and swoosh, the armor is miraculously peeled back and your entire world is righted. But what I've learned is God often requires our participation in the healing process.

Chipping, soaking or both, whatever it takes to be whole, that is my heart's desire. And I'm going after it! Won't you join me?

There are two rules for grandfather clocks:

1. Don't let the clock wind down.

2. Don't let the clock get wound too tight.

## Watering:

**Using the two rules for the grandfather clock as a metaphor for your life, how have you violated or kept these rules?**

**Write a poem, draw a picture, create a song or dance, or journal about your reflection.**

# Walking The Labyrinth

"Your life is a sacred journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. You are on the path... exactly where you are meant to be right now... And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity, and of love."
Caroline Adams

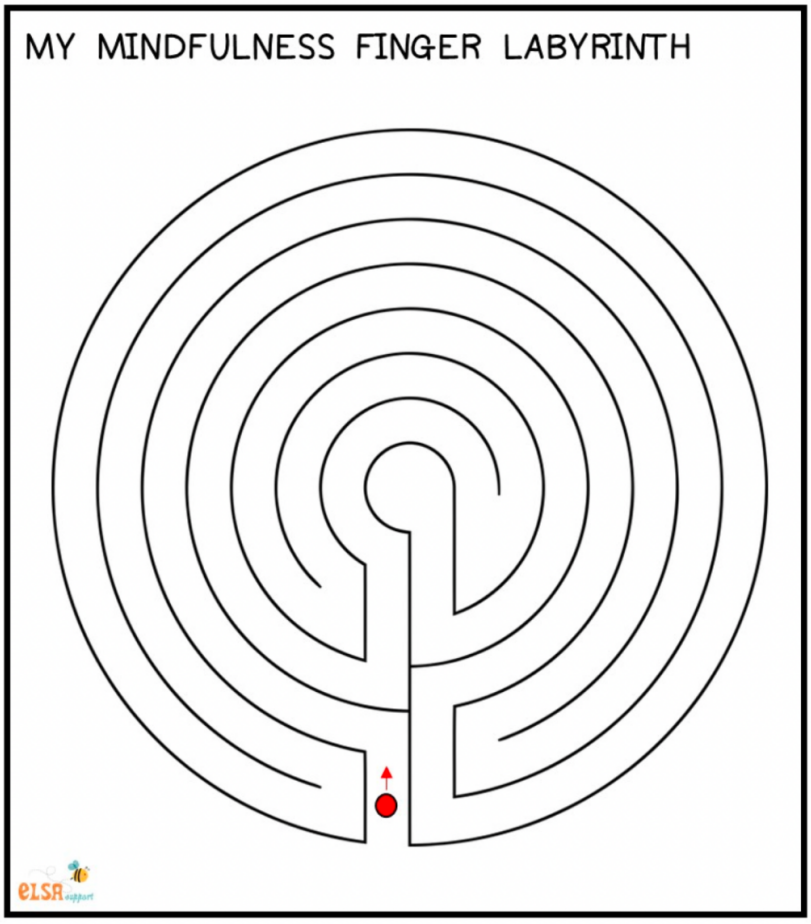
A labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The Labyrinth represents a journey to our own center and back again out into the world. Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tools.

A labyrinth has only one path. It is unicursal. The way in is the way out. There are no blind alleys. The path leads you on a circuitous path to the center and out again.

A labyrinth is a right-brain task. It involves intuition, creativity, and imagery. With a maze, many choices must be made, and an active mind is needed to solve the problem of finding the center. With a labyrinth, there is only one choice to be made. The choice is to enter or not. A more passive, receptive mindset is needed. The choice is whether or not to walk a spiritual path.

At its most basic level, the labyrinth is a metaphor for the journey to the center of your deepest self and back out into the world with a broadened understanding of who you are. On the labyrinth, you can ‘have a little talk with Jesus’ and allow Him to help you see life’s situations from different perspectives.

Walk it slowly and purposefully.  Listen to yourself and the voice of God!




**Practice "walking" the labyrinth with your finger when you cannot walk one in nature.**

# Give Me Your Wild Dreams:
# A Poem To Hold Space for Those Who Dare to Believe.

Henley Worthen

Give me your delusions
Give me your insane ideas
Come to me with all the propositions
you are too afraid to breath into sunlight
Feed me the slice of your heart that dares to dream
and I will look at you, marvel at you with starry eyes
and say
*when do we begin?*
i will look at you and not just hope and say good luck idiot
but know firmly that you can arrive there.
There are so many people in this world
who are going to look at you like a crackhead
on the side of highway 95 looking for the entrance to the
milky way when you say tell them want to be a painter,
cinematographer, that you want to
make houses out of silly putty for a living.
but my love, i promise you i will look at you with
fullness of heart and you to show me the blueprints.
In a world where people scoff at the ones
who refuse to “grow out” of dreams and call them unrealistic,
we need more dream believers.
We need to realize that people who tell us
never are speaking out of their own fear, their own blocks and disbelief.
And from those people, I urge you, protect your dream fetus.
Do not let vampires suck the blood of a dream to young to yet walk.
And seek people who will believe in your baby before it’s seen the light of day.
Seek the ones crazy enough to believe.
If you say I want to be an alien when I grow up
I am counting down the days until I can come to your first earth
landing and I will stand and applaud as you deboard that spacecraft.
I will bring you fat camellias and sayI always knew you’d do it.
why?
because I’m a believer.
I remember your power.

Because dreams don't come from nowhere,
they come from somewhere up there in the heavens
You weren't born to sort taxes or sell houses, my love.
No god, no matter how hellish sent you here to do that.
You were born with an intuition nestled into the red vessels of your heart.
You were born with a knowing of your destiny.
And when you first dreamt that dream your mind was still free
It didn't think within a timeline that said 50k by 25 and kids
5.25 years after so you're financially stable but still young enough to play,
and cue the midlife crisis at 57 then travel once you've retired
and your knobby knees are aching.
You were born knowing your power was infinite.
You ripped into this world screaming to be heard.
You beautiful thing, you have always known where to focus your energy.
You have only forgotten
And I forgot, too.
Such a silly thing, the way we forget only to remember again.
I have remembered and I remember you because we were once one.

I remember your dreams and the way you
dance along waves as big as Tanjong.
Your dreams are not jokes to me
they are evidence of god. signed.
"i made this – love, yours truly"
if you want it, go get it.

I will open my door to you any day of the week
let's sit down, have a cold cup of coffee
Show me the blueprints
Show me where the rafters will go.
Build that house out of silly putty,
and I will bring over casserole for dinner.

## Watering:

# Lectio Divina

## Reading

Find the scripture reference from your Bible. Open your mind and heart to anticipate the gift God has for you. A simple beginning gesture of open hands may be helpful. Read the passage silently or aloud, once or twice, and listen for a word, phrase or image that stands out for you in this reading.

## Reflection

Ask yourself: How does this affect me?

Does it

- expand my sense of self as loved/limited?
- expand my sense of God?
- speak to a particular circumstance in my life?
- challenge or comfort me?
- offer guidance or hope?
- arouse curiosity, discomfort, confusion?
- call me to growth or new insight?

## Conversation

Tell God what happened to you as you reflected. Honest communication fosters intimacy, so it's important to speak to God from your heart. God can be trusted to honor your spontaneous response.

You might find yourself saying:

- I love the way you...
- I'm delighted that you...
- I'm afraid when I hear...
- I can't understand how...
- I resist hearing that...
- Teach me to ...
- Please help me...

## Sabbath

Wait and rest in quiet surrender and openness. God may have some additional word... or not!

## Scripture passage:

The Watering Place

## Reading

Words or phrases important for me

## Reflection

What am I thinking/wondering about this?
What comes to mind for me?

## Conversation

God, I...

## Sabbath

As I wait and listen, I hear...

# Let It Fall

## Process

**1. Sit with your eyes closed and listen to Let It Fall performed by Highlands Worship.**
**2. As you listen for the second time, circle any words or phrases that capture your attention. Jot thoughts or images in the margins. Do not censor your thoughts. Allow them to flow freely as you allow the music to flow over and in you.**
**3. Sit for a moment with your thoughts in silence.**

Let the glory of our God fall in this place
Let the glory of our King fall in this place
Let the glory of our Savior fall in this place
Let it fall

Fall like rain on dry and desperate places
Like a flood upon our thirsty hearts
Lord, we long to worship in Your presence
Spirit come, Holy Spirit, come

Let the spirit of our God move in this place
Let the presence of our King move in this place
Let the power of our Savior move in this place
Let it fall, let it fall

Fall like rain on dry and desperate places
Like a flood upon our thirsty hearts
Lord, we long to worship in Your presence
Spirit come, Holy Spirit, come

## WATERING

**You are invited to choose one of the following questions and write any thoughts, revelations, actions, or prayers that come to mind as you reflect on this song.**

## Live in the questions.

**What questions does this song pose?**

- How can I let go of a loss with dignity and grace?
- What can I let go of that does not serve me or others?
- What new small pleasures might I experience today?
- How can I keep an expectant, peaceful heart?
- How can I pay attention to what is essential today?

## Prophetic prayer

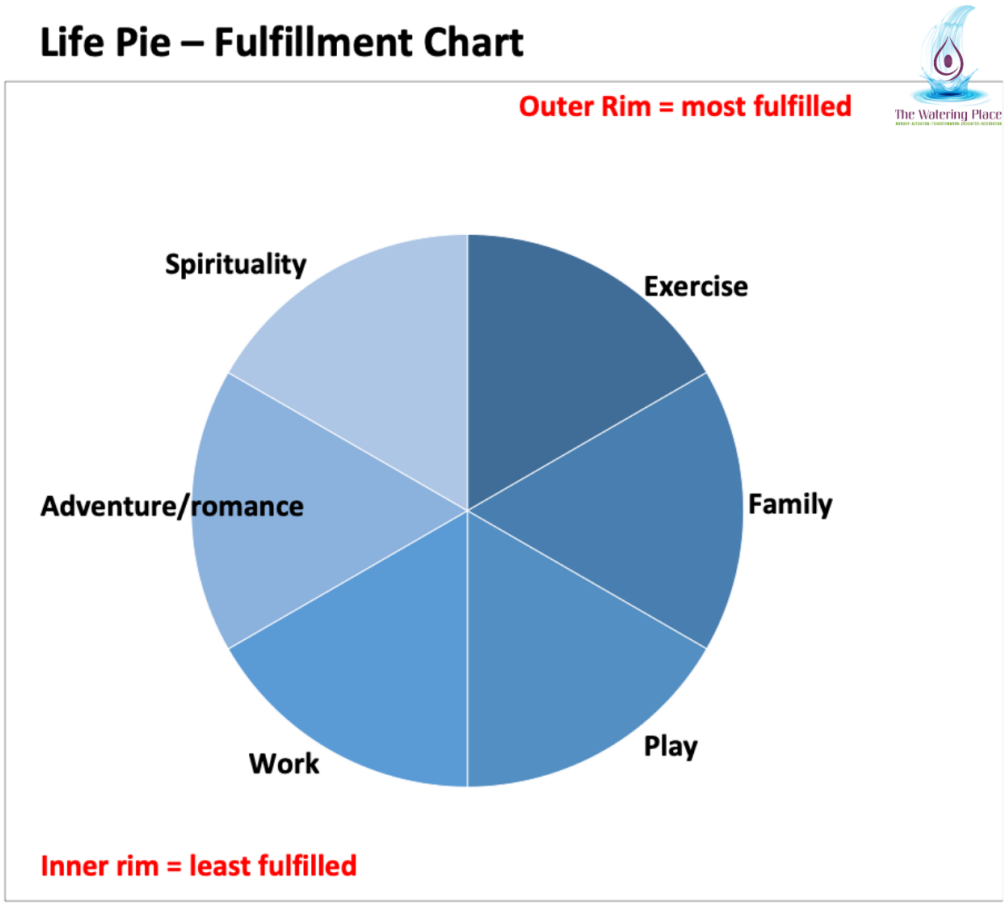
*Be still and know that I Am your God. Come into the quiet place. Sit down there with Me. I will counsel you, instruct you, give you peace and assure you of My faithfulness. You will find all you need, if you but come and spend some time with Me. I will fulfill the promises and release the provision. You will know if there are things you need to leave behind, so you can possess the future. You will defeat the giants. You will see victory because of faith in My power to do what seems impossible. Come then, My friend, pursue success. My plans for you are very, very good.*

## Holding Space

Find a quiet corner and sit quietly with the song and your notes. You might want to go for a walk instead. Either way, wait in the expectation that God has something special to say to you. Just soak in what you hear in your spirit.

## Watering Session Closure:

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Share any revelations from your quiet time.




## Process

Place a dot in each category that matches your degree of fulfillment in each of the wedges of the Life Pie. If there is a category you think should be added or renamed, feel free to do that. It's **your** chart about your life.

Connect the dots to see how balanced you are across these categories. Look for areas where you are undernourished or perhaps overly active.

## Watering:

How might practicing Sabbath help to create a more even sense of fulfillment across the categories?

Think of ten small changes you could implement that might make big changes.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

## Holding Space:

Gather with three other sisters and discuss the top three changes you plan to implement. Help each other decide on best practices for implementing change. Remember not to overstep in giving advice.

## Watering Session Closure:

Regather to close the circle.

Jesus' Invitation to Rest
Matt. 11:28
The Watering Place
Read together, slowly.
Read silently and let the words flow through you.
Repeat until you ACCEPT THE INVITATION.
Breathe & Pause
Come to me, all you who are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.
Breathe & Pause
Come to me, all you who are weary
and are carrying heavy burdens
Breathe & Pause
Come to me, all you who are weary
Breathe & Pause
Come to me
Breathe & Pause
Come

## Adapted from From An Old Woman To A Young Woman (unknown)

**1. You are not a victim. No matter what happens to you, don't blame the world for your misfortune. If you were sexually assaulted, verbally abused, etc, and lived to tell about it; take your pain and help those who need it. Writing emo poetry isn't going to solve anything.**

**2. Invest in your education first, your looks second. Anyone can pay a plastic surgeon to look hot, but not everyone can read a book and do simple math.**

**3. No matter what you call it, having a 'man to take you shopping' is glorified prostitution. He wants you for your body, you want him for his wallet. Cut the crap and call it what it is.**

**4. Do not seek confidence in other people. Magazines, celebrities, and most pop influences are there to make you feel like you're nothing. Don't buy into it. Those celebrities need your money to look fabulous. Invest in yourself, not hype.**

**5. Stop fueling gossip-mongers. They have nothing to talk about and if you follow them for long, neither will you.**

**6. Be modest; why have all your goods unwrapped and leave nothing for the imagination?**
**7. Know the difference between sex and love. There is a major difference and if you don't know it, pick up a book or ask someone who does.**

**8. Do not have children just because you're lonely or insecure. Your child will end up hating you for it and you won't get the emotional blanket you hoped you'd get.**

**9. Get a job. Seriously. Just because you're a woman doesn't mean that you are excused from work. Find a trade; get a job. If you are a stay-at-home Mom,**
**be a good one. If you are a career woman, put your heart into what you do.**

**10. A respectable companion is rarely at a 'bar' or da club'. These places are meat markets and will only set you up for a douchebag or a wimp.**
**If you go, refer to rule 7.**

**11. Learn to cook. Cooking is a dying skill that needs not be. You'd be surprised how much weight you lose and how you can get a decent companion if you know more than picking up a phone and calling for dinner.**

**12. Get off your phone. If it's not your best friend, your job or your family, your cackling is not important and the rest of the world does not want to hear it. Listen more. Talk less.**

**13. Stop putting so much of your money into things [purses, shoes, makeup] and start putting it into a savings account, a 401k, or an IRA. Those shoes are not going to vest when you turn 65.**

**14. Stop using men to get you stuff. Have some self-respect and buy your own drinks, meals, and entertainment. A date will respect you more if you show them you are not helpless.**

**15. Perfume and baby powder do not make up for good hygiene. Shower, do your laundry, clean your place. Body odor is not excusable for either gender.**

**16. Buy clothes that fit. Be tasteful with your clothing, be you big or small.**

**17. Don't eat for comfort, vomit to make yourself beautiful, and starve yourself to feel loved. Exercise, be sensible with your food choices, don't deprive yourself but never eat too much. The quickest way to a size 30, and to the grave, is past your teeth.**

**18. If they say they love you, ask them to earn your heart through good deeds, genuine kindness, and respect.**

**19. Romance is not dead, but if you're not willing to give it, don't expect it in return.**

**20. Stop being a bitch to other women and other people. If you are not happy, go get therapy. No one deserves to be berated because you don't have the guts to berate yourself.**

**21. Do something new every day. Pole dance to learn about your sensuality, paint to express your creativity or write a blog to express your soul. Evolve and never stop learning.**

**22. Look in the mirror daily and smile at what you see.**

**23. Stay safe. Learn to defend yourself against one or multiple attackers. Jackals do not attack if they see a big stick. If all else fails, run. There is no shame in running if it keeps you safe.**

**24. Love yourself. Always. When you love yourself to the fullest, the world will open with opportunities**

**25. Get to know God. You will never be happy, satisfied, at peace, filled with joy, or fulfilled if you do not know the one who created you. Talk to God on a regular basis – not just when you need something.**

## Reflect:

- **Which of these comments seem to be excellent advice?**
- **Which of these pieces of advice seem to lock women into ways of being and doing that are less than healthy?**
- **If you had to give one piece of advice to younger women, what would it be?**
- **Compile a corporate list. Feel free to borrow from this list or rewrite ones that perpetuate a cycle of abuse of women towards women.**

## Watering Session Closure:

**Regather to close the circle. What's your personal 'take-away?'**

Today I understand vocation quite differently — not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received. Discovering vocation does not mean scrambling toward some prize just beyond my reach but accepting the treasure of true self I already possess. Vocation does not come from a voice 'out there' calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice 'in here' calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.

It is a strange gift, this birthright gift of self. Accepting it turns out to be even more demanding than attempting to become someone else! I have sometimes responded to that demand by ignoring the gift, or hiding it, or fleeing from it, or squandering it — and I think I am not alone. There is a Hasidic tale that reveals, with amazing brevity, both the universal tendency to want to be someone else and the ultimate importance of becoming one's self: Rabbi Zusya, when he was an old man, said, 'In the coming world, they will not ask me: 'Why were you not Moses?' They will ask me: 'Why were you not Zusya?'

If you doubt that we all arrive in this world with gifts and as a gift, pay attention to an infant or a very young child. A few years ago, my daughter and her newborn baby came to live with me for a while. Watching my granddaughter from her earliest days on earth, I was able, in my early fifties, to see something that had eluded me as a twenty-something parent: my granddaughter arrived in the world as this kind of person rather than that, or that, or that.

She did not show up as raw material to be shaped into whatever image the world might want her to take. She arrived with her own gifted form, with the shape of her own sacred soul. Biblical faith calls it the image of God in which we are all created. Thomas Merton calls it true self. Quakers call it the inner light, or 'that of God' in every person. The humanist tradition calls it identity and integrity. No matter what you call it, it is a pearl of great price.

"In those early days of my granddaughter's life, I began observing the inclinations and proclivities that were planted in her at birth. I noticed, and I still notice, what she likes and dislikes, what she is drawn toward and repelled by, how she moves, what she does, what she says. I am gathering my observations in a letter. When my granddaughter reaches her late teens or early twenties, I will make sure that my letter finds its way to her, with a preface something like this: 'Here is a sketch of who you were from your earliest days in this world. It is not a definitive picture — only you can draw that. But it was sketched by a person who loves you very much. Perhaps these notes will help you do sooner something your grandfather did only later: remember who you were when you first arrived and reclaim the gift of true self.'

We arrive in this world with birthright gifts — then we spend the first half of our lives abandoning them or letting others disabuse use of them. As young people, we are surrounded by expectations that may have little to do with who we really are, expectations held by people who are not trying to discern our selfhood but to fit us into slots. In families, schools, workplaces, and religious communities, we are trained away from true self toward images of acceptability; under social pressures like racism and sexism our original shape is deformed beyond recognition; and we ourselves, driven by fear, too often betray true self to gain the approval of others.

We are disabused of original giftedness in the first half of our lives. Then — if we are awake, aware, and able to admit our loss — we spend the second half trying to recover and reclaim the gift we once possessed."

Parker J. Palmer
From Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation
https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/13458

"If I try to be or do something noble that has nothing to do with who I am, I may look good to others and to myself for a while. But the fact that I am exceeding my limits will eventually have consequences. I will distort myself, the other, and our relationship — and may end up doing more damage than if I had never set out to do this particular 'good.' When I try to do something that is not in my nature or the nature of the relationship, the way will close behind me.

Here is one example of what I mean. Over the years, I have met people who have made a very human claim on me by making known their need to be loved. For a long time, my response was instant and reflexive, born of the 'oughts' I had absorbed: 'Of course you need to be loved. Everyone does. And I love you.'

It took me a long time to understand that although everyone needs to be loved, I cannot be the source of that gift to everyone who asks me for it. There are some relations in which I am capable of love and others in which I am not. To pretend otherwise, to put out promissory notes I am unable to honor, is to damage my own integrity and that of the person in need — all in the name of love.

Here is another example of violating one's nature in the name of nobility, an example that shows the larger dangers of false love. Years ago, I heard Dorothy Day speak. Founder of the Catholic Worker movement, her long-term commitment to living among the poor on New York's Lower East Side — not just serving them but sharing their condition — had made her one of my heroes. So it came as a great shock when in the middle of her talk, I heard her start to ruminate about the 'ungrateful poor.'

I did not understand how such a dismissive phrase could come from the lips of a saint — until it hit me with the force of a Zen koan. Dorothy Day was saying, 'Do not give to the poor expecting to get their gratitude so that you can feel good about yourself. If you do, your giving will be thin and short-lived, and that is not what the poor need; it will only impoverish them further. Give only if you have something you must give; give only if you are someone for whom giving is its own reward.'

When I give something I do not possess, I give a false and dangerous gift, a gift that looks like love but is, in reality, loveless — a gift given more from my need to prove myself than from the other's need to be cared for. That kind of giving is not only loveless but faithless, based on the arrogant and mistaken notion that God has no way of channeling love to the other except through me. Yes, we were created in and for community, to be there, in love, for one another. But community cuts both ways: when we reach the limits of our own capacity to love, community means trusting that someone else will be available to the person in need.

2

One sign that I am violating my own nature in the name of nobility is a condition called burnout. Though usually regarded as the result of trying to give too much, burnout in my experience results from trying to give what I do not possess — the ultimate in giving too little! Burnout is a state of emptiness, to be sure, but it does not result from giving all I have: it merely reveals the nothingness from which I was trying to give in the first place.

May Sarton, in her poem 'Now I Become Myself,' uses images from the natural world to describe a different kind of giving, grounded in a different way of being, a way that results not in burnout but in fecundity and abundance:

"As slowly as the ripening fruit
"Fertile, detached, and always spent,
"Falls but does not exhaust the root . . .

When the gift I give to the other is integral to my own nature, when it comes from a place of organic reality within me, it will renew itself — and me — even as I give it away. Only when I give something that does not grow within me do I deplete myself and harm the other as well, for only harm can come from a gift that is forced, inorganic, unreal."

Parker J. Palmer
From Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation
https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/excerpts/view/15070/let-your-life-speak

# The Paradox of Autumn

Autumn is a season of great beauty, but it is also a season of decline: the days grow shorter, the light is suffused, and summer's abundance decays toward winter's death. Faced with this inevitable winter, what does nature do in autumn? She scatters the seeds that will bring new growth in the spring—and she scatters them with amazing abandon.

In my own experience of autumn, I am rarely aware that seeds are being planted. Instead, my mind is on the fact that the green growth of summer is browning and beginning to die. My delight in the autumn colors is always tinged with melancholy, a sense of impending loss that is only heightened by the beauty all around. I am drawn down by the prospect of death more than I am lifted by the hope of new life. But as I explore autumn's paradox of dying and seeding, I feel the power of metaphor. In the autumnal events of my own experience, I am easily fixated on surface appearances—on the decline of meaning, the decay of relationships, the death of a work. And yet, if I look more deeply, I may see the myriad possibilities being planted to bear fruit in some season yet to come.

In retrospect, I can see in my own life what I could not see at the time—how the job I lost helped me find work I needed to do, how the "road closed" sign turned me toward terrain I needed to travel, how losses that felt irredeemable forced me to discern meanings I needed to know. On the surface it seemed that life was lessening, but silently and lavishly the seeds of new life were always being sown.

This hopeful notion that living is hidden within dying is surely enhanced by the visual glories of autumn. What artist would ever have painted a season of dying with such a vivid palette if nature had not done it first? Does death possess a beauty that we—who fear death, who find it ugly and obscene—cannot see? How shall we understand autumn's testimony that death and elegance go hand in hand?

For me, the words that come closest to answering those questions are the words of Thomas Merton: "There is in all visible things...a hidden wholeness." In the visible world of nature, a great truth is concealed in plain sight: diminishment and beauty, darkness and light, death and life are not opposites. They are held together in the paradox of the "hidden wholeness."

In a paradox, opposites do not negate each other—they cohere in mysterious unity at the heart of reality. Deeper still, they need each other for health, as my body needs to breathe in as well as breathe out. But in a culture that prefers the ease of either-or thinking to the complexities of paradox, we have a hard time holding opposites together. We want light without darkness, the glories of spring and summer without the demands of autumn and winter, and the Faustian bargains we make fail to sustain our lives. When we so fear the dark that we demand light around the clock, there can be only one result: artificial light that is glaring and graceless and, beyond its borders, a darkness that grows ever more terrifying as we try to hold it off. Split off from each other, neither darkness nor light is fit for human habitation. But if we allow the paradox of darkness and light to be, the two will conspire to bring wholeness and health to every living thing.

Autumn constantly reminds me that my daily dyings are necessary precursors to new life. If I try to "make" a life that defies the diminishments of autumn, the life I end up with will be artificial, at best, and utterly colorless as well. But when I yield to the endless interplay of living and dying, dying and living, the life I am given will be real and colorful, fruitful and whole.

Parker Palmer
"There Is a Season: A Meditation on the Cycles of Our Inner Lives."

**Though I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been [sown], I have great faith in a seed. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders.**

*Henry David Thoreau*

## Watering Session:

- Give each person a small flower pot with soil.
- Allow time for people to decorate their pot if they prefer.
- Allow each to choose the seeds they want to sow.
- What do the seeds represent beyond the 'natural?' How would you name them?
- Allow time for each to plant and water their seeds.
- Reflect on the process of decorating and choosing seeds.
- Reflect on naming the seeds.
- Consider the ways the plant can serve as a manifestation of Thoreau's vision through journaling, drawing, or in the way that best suits the person.

## Holding Space:

Gather in small groups to discuss the process and any revelations.

## Watering Session Closure:

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Discuss how it felt to process your life in this way and how it felt to be able to share your stepping stones without judgment.

Sermon: Water The Seed, T. D. Jakes
https://youtu.be/4wIIw75Id7s

## Psalm 139:7-12 NLT

7 I can never escape from your Spirit!
I can never get away from your presence!

8 If I go up to heaven, you are there;
if I go down to the grave,[a] you are there.

9 If I ride the wings of the morning,
if I dwell by the farthest oceans,

10 even there your hand will guide me,
and your strength will support me.

11 I could ask the darkness to hide me
and the light around me to become night

12 but even in darkness I cannot hide from you.
To you, the night shines as bright as day.
Darkness and light are the same to you.

## Process

- Read the verses several times at different speeds.
- Allow the words to sound in your body and mind.
- Circle words or phrases that stand out.
- Look for the promises.
- Look for the places you might have difficulty applying to you.

## Holding Space:

Gather in small groups to discuss the process and any revelations.

## Watering Session Closure:

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Share any last thoughts or revelations.

# Redrawing Your Life

## Process:

1. Write your name on the back of your paper.
2. Choosing from the craft supplies, draw a shape on your paper in any color you'd like. It can be as simple or as detailed a shape as you prefer.
3. Pass your paper to the person on your left.
4. Add a design or color to that person's paper.
5. Continue passing the papers around the circle until yours returns to you.

## Watering:

- Examine your paper. What about it do you really like? What seems to be 'wrong?' Why? How does it make you feel? Turn the drawing so that you look at it from all four directions.
- Journal about what you see as you look at what you got back.
- Make any "corrections" to your picture you believe to be necessary. Use markers and crayon to rework your picture into something that better reflects you. You can also decide to create an entirely NEW picture if you would like. The choice is yours.
- When you are satisfied, move on to the next watering section.

## More Watering:

- Think about a song that matches the finished product.
- Feel free to move to another space where you can quietly play the song on your phone.
- Journal about the entire process.

## Holding Space:

- Regather in the sister circle. Share your finished piece of art and the song you selected.
- Share why you selected a particular song.
- Play 1-2 minutes of the song as we hold space for you.

## Watering Session Closure:

## Reflections on Listening

We have to be still
In order to follow inner wisdom, we have to first know it.
In order to know it, we have to hear it; to hear it, we have to be still. . . .
I still have on my desk the conch shell I picked up at the beach on my second day of silence. Listen, it continues to remind me.
Listen to what you can hear when you are being still.
Anne D. LeClaire | November 2017 (Vol. XXX, No. 10)
from Listening Below the Noise

Silence is not an absence but a presence. Lindbergh wrote more than fifty years ago, "Not knowing how to feed the spirit, we try to muffle its demands in distractions. Instead of stilling the center, the axis of the wheel, we add more centrifugal activities to our lives -- which tend to throw us off balance. But our spirit has an instinct for silence. Every soul innately yearns for stillness, for a space, a garden where we can till, sow, reap, and rest, and by doing so come to a deeper sense of self and our place in the universe. Silence is not an absence but a presence. Not an emptiness but repletion. A filling up.
Anne D. LeClaire | November 2011 (Vol. XXIV, No. 10)

For nine years, the first and third Mondays of the month, I am in silence; I do not speak to anyone for twenty four hours. It's life-changing. It has taught me to listen. When we listen with no responsibility to respond, we can listen fully, which allows us to hear so many things we would not hear if we were talking. This did not start as spiritual exercise, but it has become a very spiritual practice. You hear the truth from deep inside yourself.
Anne D. LeClaire May 2003 (Vol. XVI, No. 5)
from "The Boston Globe" 8/5/2001

Conversation was never begun at once, nor in a hurried manner. No one was quick with a question, no matter how important, and no one was pressed for an answer. A pause giving time for thought was the truly courteous way of beginning and conducting a conversation. Silence was meaningful with the Lakota, and his granting a space of silence to the speech-maker and his own moment of silence before talking was done in the practice of true politeness and regard for the rule that, "thought comes before speech."
Luther Standing Bear

Real listening means you don't project yourself into the situation. You simply are receptive, seeing things and they are, not as you might wish them to be.
S. T. Georgiou
From The Way of the Dreamcatcher

## WHAT TO REMEMBER WHEN WAKING

In that first hardly noticed moment in which you wake,
coming back to this life from the other
more secret, moveable and frighteningly honest world
where everything began,
there is a small opening into the new day
which closes the moment you begin your plans.

What you can plan is too small for you to live.
What you can live wholeheartedly will make plans enough
for the vitality hidden in your sleep.

To be human is to become visible
while carrying what is hidden as a gift to others.
To remember the other world in this world
is to live in your true inheritance.

You are not a troubled guest on this earth,
you are not an accident amidst other accidents
you were invited from another and greater night
than the one from which you have just emerged.

Now, looking through the slanting light of the morning window
toward the mountain presence of everything that can be
what urgency calls you to your one love?
What shape waits in the seed of you
to grow and spread its branches
against a future sky?

Is it waiting in the fertile sea?
In the trees beyond the house?
In the life you can imagine for yourself?
In the open and lovely white page on the writing desk?

David Whyte
From The House of Belonging

# Save The Girl

## Process:

1. Sit with your eyes closed and listen to Save the Hero performed by Beyoncé.
2. As you listen for the second time, circle any words or phrases that capture your attention. Jot thoughts or images in the margins. Do not censor your thoughts. Allow them to flow freely as you allow the music to flow over and in you.
3. Sit for a moment with your thoughts in silence.

### Save The Girl

James Scheffer / Beyonce Knowles / Richard Preston Butler / Ali Tamposi

I lay alone awake at night Sorrow fills my eyes
But I'm not strong enough to cry
Despite of my disguise I'm left with no shoulder
But everybody wants to lean on me I guess I'm their soldier
But who's gonna be mine?
Who's there to save the hero when she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help? Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl after she saves the world?
I bottle all my hurt inside I guess
I'm living a lie Inside my mind each day I die
What can bring me back to life? A simple word, a gesture
Someone to say you're beautiful
Come find this buried treasure
Rainbows lead to a pot of gold
Who's there to save the hero when she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help? Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl after she saves the world
I've given too much of myself and now it's driving me crazy (I'm crying out for help) Sometimes I wish someone would just come here and save me
Save me from myself
Who's there to save the hero when she's left all alone
And she's crying out for help? Who's there to save the hero?
Who's there to save the girl After she saves the world

## Holding Space:

Gather in small groups to discuss the process and any revelations.

## Wading In:

Read Nadeja Jones' blog post, *Stop Calling Me Strong*.

I sit in my room sometimes in complete silence, complete darkness and just cry. I cry to release all the things I do not or cannot say.

I am a "strong" Black woman. While the people I surround myself with are wonderful and supportive, it doesn't change that internalized feeling of shame I feel. That feeling that someone is thinking less of me for being a woman with emotions.

I have to be strong. I have to be strong for everyone else.
It reminds me so much of a song I love (which coincidentally ALWAYS makes me cry). Have you ever listened to Beyoncé's "Save The Hero"? If you haven't, do it; that song is Black women all over the world. We are constantly "holding it down" so much so that we are burying ourselves. We are drowning, and yet we still pull people to the raft. But we are left alone. We are dying.

Think about the Black women in your life. How often do they rest? Do they even rest? Do they sit still? On weekends when there is nothing to do, do they always find something to do? Have you ever seen them cry freely? If you have, what did you think?

Black women go to work in emotional, mental and even physical pain and we keep smiling. We cry in bathrooms because our tears, our pain is already invisible to most. When we come home we're exhausted but we have to still pretend because we are "strong." We do anything other than take care of ourselves. We are not the priority.

I, a Black woman, do not cry in public. I've held back tears at least 85 percent of my adult life. I do not cry in front of people unless it is socially acceptable, funerals for example. Why? Because I am conditioned to feel that crying is weakness. I had to learn to give myself permission to cry. I had to learn to give myself permission to do something I see people due on cue, because my Black woman tears are unfamiliar.

A Black woman will “I’m fine” you to death. Why? Because are you really going to listen?
We are so familiar with not being heard that we stop talking.

At this point you take our silence for strength because we always keep going. We are taught to handle everything. We are taught that tears are a sign of weakness, of fragility. However, the truth is there is so much power in the release. There is so much healing in letting those learned oppressive emotions go. The strength comes when we stop hiding ourselves.

Let’s leave the “You should have said something” performances in the past. How many times do others silence us? How often are our voices eclipsed by someone else’s privilege? Has a Black woman’s needs been overlooked by your own? We as Black women are holding the literal weight of the world. We carry it everyday, and this shit is heavy.

Stop calling me “strong” as a way of describing me. I am so much more. WE are so much more. Check in on the Black women in your life. Understand that we are scared. We are vulnerable.

We are HUMAN and WE ARE TIRED.

## Watering Session Closure:

What connections can be drawn between Beyonce's song and Ms. Jones' blog post?  Are there any intersections or overlaps between your experiences and thoughts with these two works?

## Spasmodic what??
## Donna M. Cox

I do not typically share my deepest hurts or my biggest dreams on social media because I realize that, even though I have thousand-plus friends, not all are *for* me. Not everyone who takes the time to read will understand or support the dreams God places in our hearts. Not all will pray for healing in our deepest areas. In fact, some will use what we write to speak words of defeat and discouragement, and I'm not about that. Sometimes I break that rule for specific reasons.

One day someone sent a link to a documentary about a singer in another country with spasmodic dysphonia. She went to the same clinic in Florida I attended and worked with the therapist there, who was fantastic. On top of that, the therapist is a believer who rehabilitated her own voice! That sealed it for me. This singer referenced her work with Connie, so I was excited to see it. However, as I watched ... and watched, I kept waiting for the story of hope and healing. Instead, I saw this person who had been a major pop star in her country walk away from her music. I suppose her story was intended to show life after spasmodic dysphonia. (For those like me who had never heard of SD, it is a neurological condition that causes a glitch between the nerves and vocal cords (spasms) for which there is no current cure. The only 'treatment' is Botox in the vocal cords every 3-4 months and that has its own problems.) She is now quite involved in other things and is even serving as the president of their version of ASCAP. Brava for her! I am truly happy for her.

While I recognize that she did what worked for her, what I cannot and will not accept is the thought of walking away from my craft, such a part of who I am. I think the difference is that I also believe my craft is part of my calling, and God says the gifts and calling are irrevocable. I also believe that there is a name higher than any name: cancer, spasmodic dysphonia, muscular tension dysphonia, lupus, diabetes, alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, anxiety, and any other disease. That name is JESUS, the name that is higher than high! I believe that, at the name of Jesus, all of these other names will have to bow!

Friends, you do not have to accept every word doctors speak over you life. You do not have to accept the prognosis. You have authority (*exousia*) and power (*dunamis*) to put your faith into your mouth and speak into every situation with which you deal. And praise God, it only has to be a teeny bit of faith. Some days, honestly, teeny bitty faith is all I have.

So, I publicly serve notice to every spasm that it has to go. And when I speak, I speak healing and wholeness; I see myself giving the testimony. Even as tears rain down my face in those unguarded moments or when I listen to a recording of myself, I know God is Jehovah Rapha, my healer! I know God is Jehovah Shalom, my peace. God is Jehovah Jireh, my provider. He's Jehovah Nissi, the banner that serves as my point of focus and encouragement. I don't know when I will see the manifestation of healing but I say, "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief."

So I sing, Victory is mine. Victory is mine. Victory today is mine. I told satan to get behind. Victory today is mine. Joy is mine. Peace is mine. In the name of Jesus, I have the victory! In the name of Jesus, (fill in the blank) has to flee. Oh, tell me who (or what) can stand before me when I call on that great name. Jesus. Precious Jesus, I have the victory.

Come on, sing with me!! Victory is mine.....

# Stepping Stones

The Watering Place

This activity gives us an opportunity to look at our gifts and life experiences in a way that might provide a different vantage point from which to view our lives and our vocation. This activity is an opportunity to investigate threads and detours of the journey, the path that has brought us to this moment.

### PROCESS: 30 MINUTES

- Take some time to jot down 5 or 6 "stepping stones" that have helped to shape your journey. In identifying stepping stones, we are referring to those events that come to mind when we reflect on the course that our life and work have taken. Stepping stones are those **critical events, decisions, people, or experiences** that have shaped who you are today. They may be memories, part of your family and culture, sounds, sights, smells, or words that represent or symbolize a part of who you are; or they may mark a change in direction or even an idea or insight that gave you a new understanding of yourself in relation to your life and work. Stepping stones in our lives may have been positive and life-affirming, or they may have been difficult or painful.
- Feel free to use any art supplies and the provided paper or use your journal to draw the stepping stones or to make a map or path that represents your journey.
- After you are satisfied with the stepping stones you have identified, write a sentence or two about each that captures something about its significance.

### Watering

- Observe the flow of choices and events, directions, and detours that your work, life, or vocation has taken.
- Notice if any common threads run through these stepping stones.
- Notice which ones came about because of someone outside of yourself recognizing your gifts and abilities and encouraging you to use them in a certain way.
- Notice if any came about through adversity or a painful experience.
- Notice if your stepping stones resulted from you claiming your own essential gifts, identity, and integrity which then drew you in a different direction or helped you to make a course correction.

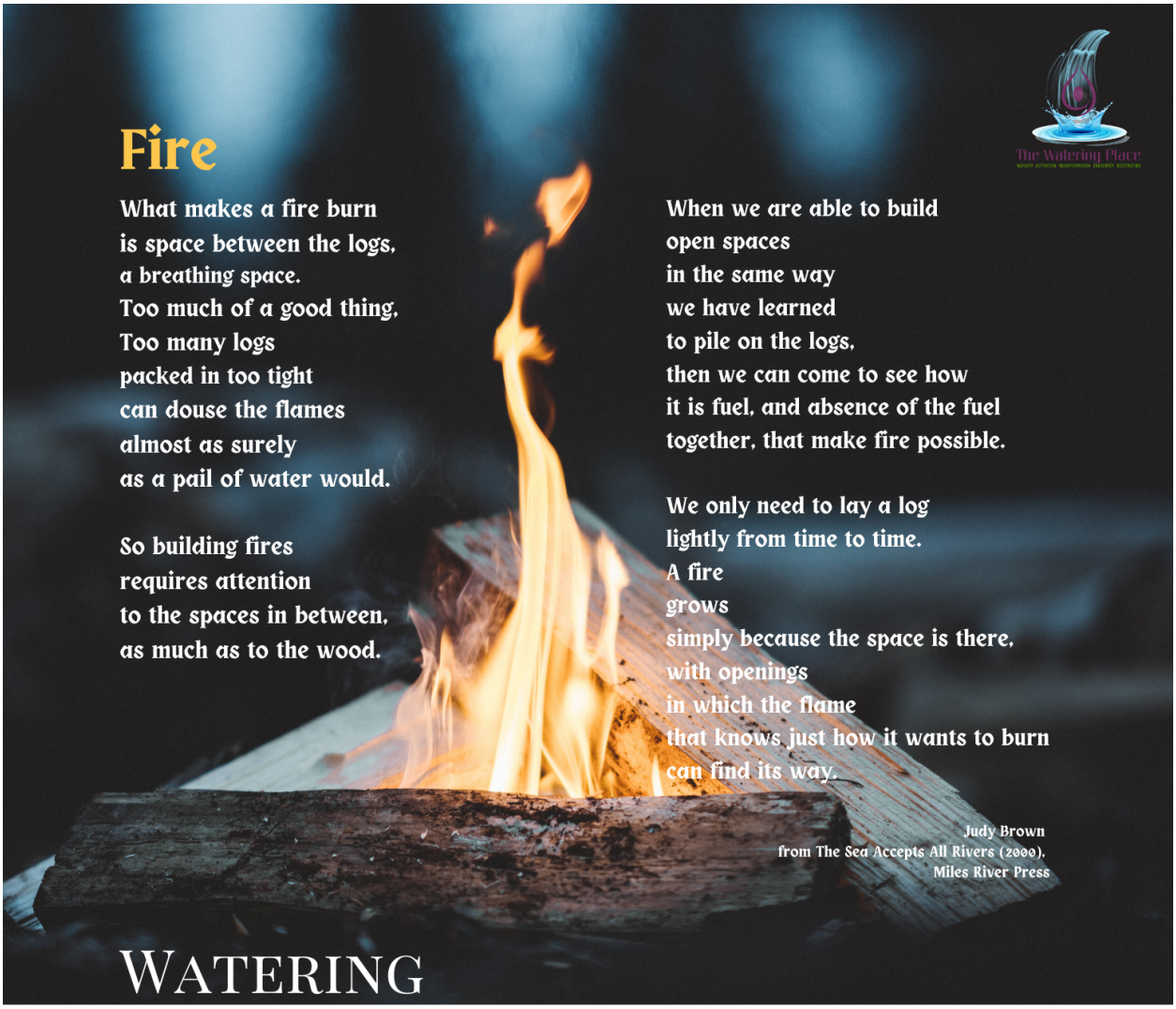
### HOLDING SPACE: 45 MINUTES

- Find three (3) other women to make a group of four. In your small group, one at a time, (re)introduce yourselves.
- Share the stepping stones you feel comfortable sharing. Remember, you can say of any stepping stone, "I think I'll pass on this one." (10 minutes per person)
  - Only one person talks at a time. The others hold space through active listening.
  - Be sure to listen completely without commenting or responding to each story.

### WATERING SESSION CLOSURE: 15

Re-enter the Sister Circle. Discuss how it felt to process your life in this way and how it felt to be able to share your stepping stones without judgment.

*Everything that happens to you is your teacher. The secret is to learn to sit at the feet of your own life and be taught by it. Polly Berends*




**You are invited to choose one of the following questions and write down any thoughts, revelations, actions, or prayers that come to mind as you reflect on this poem.**

- **What do you need to have your fire burn most effectively?**
- **Where in your life do you sense the possibility for more breathing space?**
- **Does "too much of a good thing" speak to you? In what way?**
- **How are you experiencing the balance of creating open spaces and piling on logs?**

The Watering Place
TAKE TIME TO WATER YOURSELF

# The Way It Is

There's a thread you follow. It goes among
things that change. But it doesn't change.
People wonder about what you are pursuing.
You have to explain about the thread.
But it is hard for others to see.

While you hold it you can't get lost.
Tragedies happen; people get hurt
or die; and you suffer and get old.

Nothing you do can stop time's unfolding.
You don't ever let go of the thread.

William Strafford
from Ask Me: 100 Essential Poems (2014)

**What are some of the changing things in your life?**

**What is the thread you follow?**

**How has holding to the thread kept you steady?**

## Toxic Schedules
## Dr. Caroline Leaf (Who Switched Off My Brain?)

Rush, rush rush! Hurry, hurry, hurry! Busy, busy, busy! This is the voice of the last member of the Dirty Dozen, Toxic Schedules.

The ever-increasing pace of life, called the "acceleration syndrome, is casing a global epidemic of "hurry sickness." Two symptoms are the dizzying speed at which we live and he excessive amount of living we force into our lives.

Many "solutions" offered, such as time management and learning to delegate and prioritize, are having the opposite effect. They actually increase the pace of life by creating a time squeeze and encouraging us to cram even more into an hour. These things only aggravate the problem they were supposed to address.

They make you time poor, and that poverty extends to your thought life. Your time is precious and belongs only to you. Every day you make choices about how you are going to spend your time. Learning to spend it wisely is an important part of controlling you thoughts.

The next time you think you don't have time for exercise or relaxation, think again. The reality is simply that you have chosen to fill your time with activities and things other than exercise and relaxation. Focus on what is good for you. Like many of us, you probably manage to fill your day with an endless list of things, small and large, which are not vital to your health. If you constantly focus on the little things, you might ignore the big things that ultimately determine your health, success and happiness.

Every organ and muscle in your body has a sympathetic (stressed) state and a parasympathetic (relaxed) state. Both of these systems are part of the autonomic nervous system. Researchers at the Institute of HeartMath (an organization that researches the effects of positive emotions on physiology, quality of life and performance) have found that "busy-rush syndrome" creates toxic emotions, disrupts the autonomic nervous system, leads to erratic heart rhythms and a myriad of other health problems.

If you take the time to do things that generate healthy thoughts and their positive emotions - love, respect and kindness - the result will be more coherent heart rhythms. This rhythm is a balance between the sympathetic (accelerates the heartbeat) and the parasympathetic (slows down the heartbeat) nervous systems. Therefore, relaxing is not just a luxury; it's a necessity. You need to balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. Toxic thoughts throw off this balance and predispose you to sickness.

If you don't build relaxation into your lifestyle you will become a less effective thinker, defeating your ability to accomplish the mental tasks that stole your relaxation in the fists place. In fact, for the brain to function like it should, it needs regroup/consolidation time. If it doesn't get this, it will send out signals in the form of high-level stress hormones, some of which are epinephrine, norepinephrine and cortisol. If these chemicals constantly flow, they create a "white noise" effect that increases anxiety and blocks clear thinking and the processing of information.

Simply put, relaxation is never a waste of time.

We need 10-20 minutes of some sort of down time every one-and-a-half to two hours. If we do not allow ourselves recovery time, we will simply wear ourselves out. The scary thing is, the losses may not be that evident initially, but after 3-4 hours your clear thinking and processing will drop off to all-time lows. The whole electrical-chemical building of networks is affected by increasing stress levels to the brain, making us feel agitated, frustrated, tearful and even aggressive.

**What should you do in those 10-20 minutes?**

Work on your thoughts with imagination and fun-filled mental exercises. You can think about a great scripture and imagine applying it to your life. You could imagine that next holiday or that pair of shoes thou think would look great on your feet. Imagine anything relaxing. Remember: when you imagine, it actually happens in our brain so when you imagine fun things, all kinds of good chemicals flow, preparing you for the next round of concentration.

## Questions to Consider:

⬕ Is your life one of constant scrambling and extreme workloads?
⬕ At the end of the day, do you feel frustrated that you haven't achieved enough?
⬕ Do you tend to focus on what you haven't done more than what you have done?
⬕ Do you know when to stop working and take a break?
⬕ Are you overshadowed by a fear of not living up to someone's expectations? If yes, then your relaxation (peace) will be stolen because this toxic thought will drive you all the time.
⬕ Have you simply lost your ability to switch off and take a break?
⬕ Have you ever thought about the negative effects on our minds and health if you don't relax?

## Watering:

- Make a list of what you would eliminate from your life if you only had six months to live.
- Make a second list of what you would really like to do in those six months to make you as happy and content as possible.
- Now what???

## Holding Space

Gather with a partner and share the revelations. After each has shared, pray together.

## Watering Session Closure:

Regather to close the circle.

**Traveling is as refreshing for some**
**as staying at home is for others.**

**Solitude in a mountain place**
**fills with companionship for this one,**
**and weariness for that one.**

**This person loves being in charge**
**of the workings of a community.**

**This other one loves the ways**
**heated iron can be shaped with a hammer.**

**Each has been given a strong desire**
**for certain work, a love for those motions,**
**and all motion is love.**

**The way sticks and pieces of dead grass and leaves**
**shift about in the wind**
**and with the directions of rain and puddle-water**
**on the ground, those motions**
**are all following the love**
**they have been given.**

Rumi (1207-1273)
From One-Handed Basket Weaving
Translation by Coleman Barks (1991)

For humankind,
a growing gap between
our inner selves and outer selves
— an imbalance between
how we live our lives and
how we would like to live them
— leaves the spirit thirsting for renewal.
For many, renewal and re-creation come
with time spent in the natural world.
The human spirit and
the open landscape
are inextricably connected.
In feeling the spirit of place,
we reconnect with the spirit of self.

Sabra Field and J. Lingelbach
from BEFORE LIFE HURRIES ON 2003

The search—
for self,
for wisdom,
for love,
for truth,
for justice,
for God—
is strenuous and unending.
We need good companions
in order to persevere in it.
In good company,
in a community of conviction,
the quest never loses its relevance,
its urgency,
or its savor.

Kathleen "Kaye" Ashe, OP

## Watering:

I matter

**When Superwoman Isn't So Super**

Your strength is admired by all.

People always turn to you for their rescue.
But meanwhile, in your secret fortress of solitude,
away from the limelight, there's something people don't see.
You're depressed, anxious, an emotional wreck,
doubtful, sad, and lonely.
Folks yearn for your strength, decisiveness,
boldness, confidence, and resources
but can't handle your insecurities and vulnerabilities.
The people always want Superwoman
but shun and ridicule Kristen Wells.
The truth is, Superwoman and Kristen Wells are one and the same.
Knowing that people only want you for your strengths
can become psychological and emotional Kryptonite
that even Superwoman can't handle alone.

Strength is being true to Kristen.
Give her the help she needs.
Wear your cape with all of its "imperfections" proudly.
Without "imperfections," you would not be great.

Admire your own strength.

Adapted from WHEN SUPERMAN ISN'T SO SUPER...
Michael Robinson

## Wherever You Are My Love Will Find You

I wanted you more
than you ever will know
so I sent love to follow
wherever you go.
It's high as you wish it. It's quick as an elf.
You'll never outgrow it...it stretches itself!

So climb any mountain...
climb up to the sky!
My love will find you.
My love can fly!

Make a big splash! Go out on a limb!
My love will find you. My love can swim!

It never gets lost, never fades, never ends...

if you're working...

or playing...

or sitting with friends.

You can dance 'til you're dizzy...

paint 'til you're blue...

There's no place, not one,
that my love can't find you.

And if someday you're lonely,
or someday you're sad,
or you strike out at baseball,
or think you've been bad...

just lift up your face, feel the wind in your hair.
That's me, my sweet baby, my love is right there.

In the green of the grass...in the smell of the sea...
in the clouds floating by...at the top of a tree...
in the sound crickets make at the end of the day...

"You are loved. You are loved. You are loved," they all say.

My love is so high, and so wide and
so deep, it's always right there, even
when you're asleep.

So hold your head high
and don't be afraid
to march to the front
of your own parade.

If you're still my small babe
or you're all the way grown,
my promise to you
is you're never alone.

You are my angel, my darling,
my star...and my love will find you,
wherever you are.

You are loved.

(Nancy Tillman)

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my promise to you
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my star...and my love will find you,
wherever you are.

You are loved.

(Nancy Tillman)

## Encounter Session PROCESS:

Responses

**Step 1:** Invite Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

**Step 2:** Read through the short story by Nancy Tillman. Pay attention to any phrases or parts that stick out to you. Make notes in the story or in the space to the right.

**Step 3:** Spend time interacting with God by asking questions and listening for answers.

*God's voice, as described by Mark Virkler, sounds like "spontaneous thoughts that light upon my mind as my heart is quiet before the Lord."*

*Holy Spirit may give you pictures, ideas, thoughts, feelings, a sense, a knowing, or memories as you engage. Be fully open. Be surprised.*

# Water:

*And if someday you're lonely*
*Or someday you're sad*
*Or you strike out at baseball,*
*Or think you've been bad...*

*Just lift up your face, feel the wind in your hair.*
*That's me, my sweet baby, my love is right there.*

**God, am I carrying any fear of losing your love or not being good enough? What's the truth? What would you like for me to do with this fear?**

*It's high as you wish it. It's as quick as an elf.*
*You'll never outgrow it.... it stretches itself.*

**God, remind me of a time in my life when I felt really loved by you. Is that love available to me right now?**

*So hold your head high*
*And don't be afraid*
*To march to the front*
*Of your own parade*

**God, is there any area in my life where my head is not high? Is there any part of me that lacks confidence? How do you see me? What do you think of me?**

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