

Fill Your Cup

What If God Is Speaking and We are Too Full to Hear? a class designed to help us love better and live with more joy

Some time ago, I shifted how I think about my life. I started trying to think of *my cup as overflowing* instead of just being really busy and/or out of control. I was trying to shift my orientation to one of gratitude. And it really helped. I realized that having so much in my life – so many people to love and so much good to work from which to choose – is gift.

And.

And lately I have been realizing something else: *if you cup is overflowing, it really matters what is in our cup*. When we overflow into the world, what is pouring out? Is it peace and joy and love and the power of the Living God? Or is it anxiety, a sense of scarcity, cynicism, judgment and fear?

How we manage the stuff of our life – whatever stuff that is – profoundly affects how we live out our calling to bear God's love and peace and power into the world. Anxious disciples make for an anxious Christianity in a world already reeling from an anxiety epidemic.

So, Spiritual Development and Adult Learning is offering a series of five classes in which we are invited to consider what is our cups. How do we let go of toxicity and make it possible for Living Water to flow through us and into the world?

We will offer these classes Sunday after church and on Wed evenings at 7pm.

Sun. at Noon		Wed. at 7pm
January 5	What's In Your Cup?	January 8
January 12	Letting Go of Thoughts and Judgment	January 15
January 19	Letting Go of Fear, Cynicism & Controlling Outcomes	January 22
January 26	Full Presence and the Moment	January 29
February 2	Ears to Hear	February 5

The Basics of Session One: What's In Your Cup

Take a few moments for some quiet, spacious, lovingkindness. Breathe in and out deeply a couple of times. Let your shoulders fall away from your ears. Just be for a moment, letting any worries or thoughts or shoulds fall away. You can pick them up in a few minutes if you want them back.

Now, consider this life you have. This body is a sort of container for your being. In this cup of being, you think and feel and dream and plan and desire and choose how to be in the world. Your being overflows into the world.

Wherever you find yourself, consider that God is placing you there that the love of Christ which dwells within you might reach out and touch others through you.

Paul writes, *Do you not know that you are a dwelling place of the Holy One?*

You are precious and beloved and made in the image of God. When you are healthy and whole and moving in the flow of God's love and power, tremendous beauty and healing and grace pours forth into the world.

When you or I are anxious or bitter or depleted or resentful or overwhelmed or panicked, what overflows from us can be useless or damaging or toxic.

How do we want to be? How can we move deeper into the Way of Love, into the Flow of God's Power, so that our joy is complete & our work within God's hope for us all is done?

When we fill our lives up with work or worries that are not ours to be doing right now, we can become lost, confused or resentful. When we feel depleted and are overcome by a sense of scarcity, we are wounded and deserve attention. We are also unable to love well – to love ourselves or others.

It is possible to shift things. To cooperate with the Spirit of God at work within you and to find peace and joy and purpose.

This week, with gentle lovingkindness and without judgment, consider the reality of your life. What is working? What is not working? What brings you closer to the Holy One? Where do you feel yourself moving away? What do you hope for yourself? What do you long for? How are you feeling? What is the state of your cup? What is inside it? Is it full or empty? What is flowing forth from you?

May the pages that follow be of use to you in your reflection. Use only what helps. Do not let this self-reflection be a burden in itself. May the God who adores you, grant you wisdom, courage and the space to consider "your cup."

Minimum Daily Requirements
Based on the work of Jennifer Loudon

What must you have to stay in touch with yourself,
to feel rooted and grounded in God/Love,
to be able to bear that love into the world?

Give yourself time to figure these out.
Notice what you desire or crave or miss or lack.

Daily

Weekly

Quarterly

Examples

Enough sleep
Exercise, moving your body
Eating fresh, real food
Being Touched
Connecting to God
Remember to breath
Check where your shoulders are
Listen to your deep wisdom
Vitamins
Essential Oils
Yoga
Touch
Art just for fun
Gratitude Practice

Time with someone you love
Time alone
Drinking enough water
A massage
Journaling
A long walk
Reading for Pleasure
Working on a project/hobby
Eat breakfast
Read a poem
Watching a Hallmark movie
Getting in touch with what you want
Watching the birds

Can you use a habit chain or daily ritual to meet some of these needs? A morning and/or evening routine?

Reflection Questions

Without _____, I lose myself.

I get cranky when I don't or can't

What helps me feel most on my own side.....

I feel most me when.....

When I feel most connected to myself, I am

Doing _____ is when I feel most connected to God.

My body needs

I could live without _____ but the cost to myself would be huge.

Is balance a good way to think about life or does that drive you crazy?

Is my plan for myself humanly possible? Can I pull it off on an average day?

What adjectives or pictures come to your mind when you imagine a good life for you?

Listening to Yourself

Listen to Your Life: Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent.

Parker Palmer

Listening Collage

First you begin to collect images that strike you from magazines, postcards, anything. Save them. (Katie has a great pile you can use.) Sort through them up and pick up those that resonate strongly with you. You do not need to know why. When you have a couple, sit with them. Cut them out so they are “right.” Arrange them on the paper. Listen, probably without words, as you do so. Then glue them on. Sit and look at/through the images for a while. What are they saying to/for you? Be curious. Maybe journal.

Listen to Your Life

Make a map of your life. You might do this by making a time line and putting significant dates on it. You might begin to draw, make lumps of color or symbols for significant events and then draw lines to connect them. The point here is to make a visual guide to the course of your life. What are the major events, the shaping influences? When you have this done, see what you notice. Ask yourself questions as if this person’s life before you belonged to another and you are curious, honoring this other with loving attention. Where might you see God, the Universe, your Trues Self, Being nudge and guide you along? How did all this shape you? Who are you now?

Back to the Archives: What did you love when you were ten?

“When we lose track of true self, how can we pick up the trail? One way is to seek clues in stories from our younger years, years when we lived closer to our birthright gifts.” (Parker Palmer 13) Recall yourself, say at age 10. Jot down everything you can remember about what you loved to do then. What has remained constant? What went by the wayside? Are there any clues for what you might love to do now?

Sitting (maybe with a journal)

First you will need to take some deep breaths. Then you will need to notice where the tension is in your body. You might be curious about why it is there. You might release it as best you can. Then you do the same with your mind. What is running through you? Notice it. Then detach yourself. Ask yourself a question like: What do you need? How are you? What do you desire? Sit and see what happens.

Freewriting (or drawing, doodling)

The deal here is to not let your hand stop for the amount of time you set. Start with five or ten minutes. You can just plunge in and go, writing “I don’t know what to say” if you need to and then see what happens. You can also do a focused freewrite in which you ask yourself a question and then write in response.

Notes from *The Power of Less* by Leo Babauta (2009)

Think about an area of your life that is (or will soon become) overwhelming.

Simplicity has two steps:

1. **Identify the essential.**
2. **Eliminate the rest.** (Create space for what is really important to you.)

Six Principles of Simple Productivity

1. Set limitations
2. Choose the essential.
3. Simplify.
4. Focus.
5. Create habits
6. Start small.

Principle 1: By setting limitations, we must choose the essential. So in everything you do, learn to set limitations. (maybe think "boundaries" rather than limitations.)

Principle 2: By choosing the essential, we create great impact with minimal resources. Always choose the essential to maximize your time and energy.

Do less.

Choose what you do with intention.

Focus.

Choosing the essential.

1. What are your values?
2. What are your goals?
3. What do you love?
4. What is important to you?
5. What has the biggest impact?
6. What has the most long-term impact?
7. Needs vs. wants.
8. Eliminate the nonessential.
9. Continual editing process.

Focus on a goal.

Focus on now.

Focus on the task at hand.

Focus on the positive.

Be gentle.

There is no failure.

Keep practicing.

Noticing

- 1 Become aware of something you are doing that causes you harm or does damage in the world or moves you away from being whole and free and all the way alive.
- 2 Spend some time knowing in your deep places that you are beloved and precious and that we are all sometimes acting out of our wounds and broken places.
- 3 Realize that you do not want to be stuck in this way of living. Commit to paying attention to this aspect of yourself and your life. Be in conversation with God about this. Call upon the Spirit of God who dwells within you.
- 4 Notice when you do this thing. Just notice. Don't judge.
- 5 Practice self-compassion.
- 6 Notice how you feel when you do this thing. What is going on? As you sit with what happens, what else do you notice? Become curious – gently. Be open to what you will discover.
- 7 Keep giving yourself love.
- 8 Celebrate and give thanks as this behavior gradually untangles, as it has less frantic and stubborn energy about it. As you begin to do this less and recover more quickly.
- 9 Do not be surprised when you do this again. That is part of being a human being.
- 10 Know that you are moving deeper into Love and becoming more whole, more your own True Self.

Notice. Love.

Note: It is a wonderful gift to have someone who can support us in our inner work. If you have someone who can be with you in this without judging you or having his or her own shame buttons pushed, that kind of companionship will help your transformation.

Notice. Name. Allow.

So, Know Thyself

Love After Love

Derek Walcott

The time will come when,
with elation
you will greet yourself arriving
at your own door, in your own mirror
and each will smile at the other's welcome,

And say, sit here. Eat.
You will love again the stranger who was your self.
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you

all your life, whom you ignored
for another, who knows you by heart.
Take down the love letter from the bookshelf

the photographs, the desperate notes,
peel your own image from the mirror.
Sit. Feast on your life.

“At some point you will learn who you are, what you truly are: and the one who lives your life becomes a different person.”

Hamed Almaas
The Power of Divine Eros

On the Heart

The ancients believed that the heart was the center of the body, the organ responsible for the movement of the body to action. The heart is the center of the person, the place where one makes choices and from which one moves into action.

More specifically, as the eyes were meant to see and the ears to hear, the heart is meant to understand, to discern, to give insight. The Alexandrian Jewish scribes translated into Greek about 200 b.c. the Hebrew text of Proverbs 2:10, "wisdom will enter your heart" by "wisdom will come into your understanding (dianoian [diavnoia])" because to them it meant the same thing. When a person lacks insight the Hebrew speaks of a "lack of heart."

The greatest commandment according to Jesus is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Matt 22:37). Love here is more than emotion; it is a conscious commitment to the Lord.

"Yes, it is certainly true that the heart's native language is affectivity -- perception through deep feelingness. But it may come as a shock to contemporary seekers to learn that the things we nowadays identify with the feeling life -- passion, drama, intensity, compelling emotion -- are qualities that in the ancient anatomical treatises were associated not with the heart but with the *liver!* They are signs of agitation and turbidity (an excess of bile!) rather than authentic feelingness. In fact, they are traditionally seen as the *roadblocks* to the authentic feeling life, the saboteurs that steal its energy and distort its true nature. . . .

According to the great wisdom traditions of the West (Christian, Jewish, Islamic), the heart is first and foremost *an organ of spiritual perception*. Its primary function is to look beyond the obvious, the bounded surface of things, and see into a deeper reality, emerging from some unknown profundity, which plays lightly upon the surface of this life without being caught there: a world where meaning, insight, and clarity come together in a whole different way." (54)

Cynthia Bourgeault *The Heart of Centering Prayer*

"Only when the mind is 'in the heart,' grounded and tethered in that deeper wellspring of spiritual awareness, is it possible to live the teachings of Jesus without hypocrisy or burnout. The gospel requires a radical openness and compassion that is beyond the capacity of the anxious, fear-ridden ego." (Bourgeault 72-73)

“From fMRI data collected primarily by the California-based HeartMath Institute, you can now verify chapter and verse that **how you respond to a stimulus in the outer world determines which neural pathways will be activated in your brain, and between your brain and your heart. If you respond with any form of initial negativity (which translates physiologically as constriction) -- freezing, bracing, clinging, clenching, and so on -- the pathway illumined leads to your amygdala (or ‘reptilian brain,’ as it’s familiarly known): that most primitive part of your hindbrain, which controls a repertory of highly energized flight-or-flight responses. If you can relax *into* a stimulus -- opening, softening, yielding, releasing -- the neural pathway leads through the more evolutionarily advanced parts of your forebrain and surprisingly, brings brain and heart rhythms into entrainment.” (35)**

“So when I talked about exercising that ‘muscle’ of letting go, you can see now that I wasn’t simply using a metaphor. Every time we manage to let go of a thought in Centering Prayer, ‘consenting to the presence and action of God within,’ the gesture is actually *physically embodied*. It’s not just an attitude; **something actually ‘drops and releases’ in the solar plexus region of your body, a subtle but distinct form of interior relaxation.**” (35-36)

quotes Kabir Helminski

We have subtle subconscious faculties we are not using. Beyond the limited analytic intellect is a vast realm of mind that includes psychic and extrasensory abilities; intuition; wisdom; a sense of unity; aesthetic, qualitative and creative faculties; and image-forming and symbolic capacities. Though these faculties are many, we give them a single name with some justification for they are working best when they are in concert. They comprise a mind, moreover, in spontaneous connection to the cosmic mind. This total mind we call ‘heart.’

‘The heart,’ Helminski continues,

is the antenna that receives the emanations of subtler levels of existence. The human heart has its proper field of function **beyond the limits of the superficial, reactive ego-self. Awakening the heart, or the spiritualized mind, is an unlimited process of making the mind more sensitive, focused, energized, subtle, and refined, of joining it to its cosmic milieu, the infinity of love.** (55)

Cythia Bourgeault. *The Heart of Centering Prayer: Nondual Christianity in Theory and Practice*. Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, 2016.