



## Part One Being Real Why Would you Want to Be Holy?

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Printable  
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Meditation

A monk in his travels once found a precious stone and kept it. One day he met a traveler, and when the monk opened his bag to share his provisions with him, the traveler saw the jewel and asked the monk to give it to him. The monk did so readily. The traveler departed, overjoyed with the unexpected gift of the precious stone that was enough to give him wealth and security for the rest of his life. However, a few days later he came back in search of the monk, found him, gave him back the stone, and entreated him, "Now give me something much more precious than this stone, valuable as it is. Give me that which enabled you to give it to me."

--from a story told by Anthony de Mello

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Having offered his testimony, Morpheus wastes no time in presenting Neo with the opportunity to begin initiatory rites. Though they have, in a sense, already begun, Neo has to decide before he enters the point of no return. As Tresmontant explains, the "personal act of judgment, of refusal, of choice" cannot be avoided; the No to the old world and the Yes to the new. This is only the beginning, but it isn't too late to turn back. The red pill or the blue pill: "You take the blue pill and the story ends. You wake in your bed and you believe whatever you want to believe." In spite of Morpheus' charisma, the viewer knows that the blue pill is a genuine temptation of comfortable numbness and ease. The red pill is the avenue to truth, the unmasking of fictions, and as-yet-unimagined strife: "Remember, all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more." Neo takes the red pill.

--from David Dark, "Who Put These Fingerprints On My Imagination? - Engaging the Matrix,"

Adapted from *Everyday Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002)

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We know [true spirituality] when we see it. We may not be able to articulate what it is we see, but we see it. We all, at one point or another, seek to be in the presence of [such] a holy person because we somehow sense that if we can sit at the feet of such a person, the inner disparities of our own life will be gathered together and resolved. That is why people search out spiritual guides and gurus. There is a hope and anticipation that there is someone who is somehow closer to divine truth than we are and that their truth will somehow be conveyed to us.

When we seek out holy people and find them, what is most palpable about them is that they have a sense of "completeness"--they seem free of the anxiety, duplicity, and complex desires that so characterize and plague our daily lives. They seem to have become detached from what is extraneous. They have a

"Tell me the landscapes in which you live, and I will tell you who you are."

Ortega y Gasset

single-minded focus and there is a peace and contentment about them that seems strangely absent in our own lives.

While this is attractive, we are shy about seeking to become holy ourselves. Partly this is because we misunderstand holiness. We think holiness is something that can only be acquired by heroic effort. We are sure it will require all night vigils, being a member of a monastery community, living a life devoid of fun and frivolity, meditating for hours each day, wearing out our knees and our backs in prayer, never lying or cheating or feeling lust in our heart. Or, if none of that, at least it will be a life that is dreary, so concentrated and focused as to be boringly dull.

Let me suggest to you that holiness is not what you think it is. In theological terms we talk about holiness as being 'set apart'--set apart for God. Even that, however, is a misunderstanding of the word. The actual root word is *hool* with "w" placed at the beginning, and it literally means whole. The simple duty of us all becomes nothing more, nothing less than becoming whole. Holiness is the process by which we integrate the loose threads of our life into a whole tapestry of beauty and divine grace. This is a creative task for the entirety of our lives. The Good News is that we can set aside all the to-do lists of things that we think are required for reaching some standard of moral and spiritual perfection, and open ourselves instead to the invitation and creative possibility of becoming whole in God.

To become whole in God means aligning our lives with God through such things as: *Seeing* the world and ourselves through God's eyes. *Forgiving* others even when the pain of hurt and betrayal sticks in the throat like hard, dry clay. *Not judging* others even when their behavior makes our heartbeat quicken and our breath shorten. Having the courage to *face evil* and overcome its power with the goodness that is foolhardy in the eyes of the world. Staying in the place of *unconditional love* even when love seems imprudent and so difficult as to make us want to run away.

These are the loose threads that we spend our lives weaving together into the beautiful tapestry of holiness--wholeness in God. Far from being dull and dreary chores of the soul, becoming whole in God can be an adventure as thrilling and dramatic as the latest Hollywood action movie, and the result is that we no longer need someone else's holiness to rub off on us just so we feel better about ourselves.

--*Renee Miller*

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How do we now here at this moment in this place live and act in a contemplative, Godly way? There are two stories, one from the Sufi masters and one from the monastics of the desert that tell us most, I think, about what it means to live an illuminated, a contemplative life in hard times. In the first, the Sufi tell about a spiritual elder who asked the disciples to name what was the most important thing in life, wisdom or action. And the disciples were unanimous in their opinions. "Well, it's action, of course," they said. "After all, of what use is wisdom that does not show itself in action?" And the master said, "Well, perhaps. But of what use is action that proceeds from an unenlightened heart?"

In the second story from the desert monastics, Abba Pullman says of Abba John that he had prayed to God to take his passions away from him so that he might become free from care. And in fact, Abba John reported to him, "I now find myself in total peace without an enemy." But Abba Pullman said to Abba John, "Really? Well, in that case, go and beg God to stir up warfare within you again, for it is by warfare that the soul makes progress." And after that, when warfare came, Abba John no longer prayed that it might be taken away. Now he simply prayed, "Lord, give me the strength for the fight."

--Joan Chittister

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Jewish spirituality... is a matter of seeing the holy in the everyday, and invites us to wake up and open our eyes to the holy things happening all around us every day. A lot of them are so obvious they are taken for granted unless, God forbid, you are struck with illness or have experienced misfortune. When we wake up and see the morning light, that's a spiritual moment according to Judaism. When we taste food and are nourished. When we learn from others and grow wise. When we embrace people we love and receive their love in return. When we help those around us and feel good. All these and more are there for us every day, but you have to open your eyes to see them. Otherwise, you miss it. Remember the famous phrase from Genesis when Jacob wakes up from his dream? "God was in this place, and I did not know it."

--from Rabbi Micah Greenstein,

["How to Lead a Spiritual Life: A Jewish Perspective"](#)

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At some point, we, as human beings, become aware of this gap between our beliefs and our experience and begin to wrestle with our questions about how to live authentically. The desire to enter those questions, and as the German poet

Questions  
to Ponder  
Alone

Who are the people I have encountered in my life that were spiritually authentic and what made them so?

When am I most spiritually authentic?

If I were to articulate three things I believe God wants for the world, what would they be?

Questions  
to Ponder  
with Others

How is my life  
greater than the  
daily activities that  
fill it?

In what ways am I  
living my life as a  
projection of other  
images fed to me  
by the popular  
culture?

Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, to "live into the answers," usually occurs in mid to later life--though not always. God created us in such a remarkable way that we are actually wired for growth that leads us closer and closer to communion with God--to knowledge of God, not merely about God, a knowing of the heart, not just the head. Evidence of this wiring (our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee, according to St. Augustine) is found in what most of us experience around mid-life. We get this yearning to live with more authenticity, and if we respond to that yearning (instead of shoving it back down again), it can be an unsettling enterprise, not only to ourselves, but also to those in our relational orbit.

We yearn to say what we mean, to be boldly who we really are..., to live each day with growing integrity, to connect with the true self (where, by the way, we meet God)--or to put it in the familiar language of the Velveteen Rabbit, one of our childhood heroes: to be REAL.

I realize that phrases like "getting real" and "finding out who we are" may have become hackneyed in the past few years. Our bookstores are literally bulging with books telling us how to do this ad nauseum. But no matter how many books we read, how much information we soak up, no one can do it for us; the individual journey becomes uniquely our own. Secondhand information may inspire and entertain, even guide us, but in the final analysis, it is still secondhand.

From Linda Douty, "[Getting from Sunday to Monday](#)"

This Section  
in printable  
format.

For  
Deeper Study

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The pane of glass freshly cleaned opens us to the world beyond. The dust has been cleared away so that what was a blur can be seen with definition. This is an image of the authentic life. When we have cleaned the pane of our life in order to be authentic, we find we become a window for others to the world beyond. This authenticity is grounded in being the best we can be without sham, excuse or apology. It is to love our 'self' into what it can become. It's so seductive in our culture to be other than what we are--to be like someone else, to hide our inner being, to be what people want or expect us to be--rather than dwelling in the truth of our own unique, yet universal, being. A lack of authenticity drives us far away from our own beating heart, fills us with anxiety and stress, and ends up destroying inner beauty, because it is the living of a lie. Facing who we are, no matter how inadequate we have come to believe ourselves to be, is the beginning of living an authentic, real, honest and beautiful life. And, it's the only way to truly make a difference in the lives of others.

--Renee Miller

You will need the free adobe acrobat reader to view the pdf files.

## Process for Meditation and Psalm

### Process for Meditation

1. Take a few moments to be silent and center yourself in the presence of God.
2. Read the Psalm completely through once.
3. Read the Psalm again very slowly, verse by verse, leaving at least one minute of silence between verses.
4. After going through the entire Psalm, sit in silence for 3- 5 minutes, asking God to feed your soul with the truths of the Psalm.
5. End the time with a short prayer of thanksgiving.

### **Psalm 42:1-7**

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?

3 My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?"

4 These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help

6 and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. NRSV

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## Being Real FEatured Speakers & Writers

### **Joan Chittister**

A widely published author, columnist and noted international lecturer, Joan D. Chittister, OSB, is executive director of Benetvision: A Resource and Research Center for Contemporary Spirituality located in Erie, Pennsylvania. A member and past prioress of the Benedictine sisters of Erie, she is past president of the conference of American Benedictine Prioresses. The most recent of her 26 books are *New Designs: An Anthology of Spiritual Vision* and *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope*. She has been a leading voice on Benedictine spirituality and practice for over 25 years.

**For more information please go to: <https://www.benetvision.org>**

### **David Dark**

David Dark has published articles and reviews in Prism magazine and Books & Culture. His book *Everyday Apocalypse: The Sacred Revealed in Radiohead, the Simpsons and other Pop Culture Icons* was published in 2002 by Brazos Press. Dark teaches English at Christ Presbyterian Academy in Nashville.

**For more information please go to: [David Dark Bio](#) and [David Dark's Website](#).**

### **Linda Douty**

Linda Douty currently serves as a book reviewer, teacher, retreat leader and individual spiritual director, sharing her personal experiences as well as knowledge gained at the The Academy for Spiritual Formation, *Bethel Bible Series*, SMU's Perkins School of Theology and the Shalom Institute of Spiritual Guidance. Douty is a regular presenter at the Center for Spiritual Growth in Memphis, Tennessee.

**For more information please go to: [Linda Douty Bio](#) and [Samaritan Counseling Center of the Mid-South](#).**

### **Laurence Freeman**

Father Freeman is a monk of the Monastery of Christ the King, Cockfosters, London. From the International Centre of the Christian Meditation Community in London, he now serves a worldwide network of 27 meditation centres and more than a thousand weekly meditation groups in 50 countries. He travels regularly in North and South America, Europe, Australia and Asia. He is involved in contemplative inter-religious dialogue and led The Way of Peace dialogue with the Dalai Lama. His six books include *Light Within*, *Selfless Self*, and *Jesus: The Teacher Within*.

**For more information please go to: [Medio Media](#) and [World Community for Christian Meditation](#).**

### **Micah D. Greenstein**

Named by *Memphis Magazine* as one of the city's most significant leaders, Rabbi Greenstein became Temple Israel's eighth Senior Rabbi on September 1, 2000, after serving Temple as Assistant and Associate Rabbi since 1991. Former

President of Memphis Ministers Association, he is a board member of the National Civil Rights Museum and faculty member of Memphis Theological Seminary.

**For more information please go to: [Micah Greenstein Bio](#) and [Temple Israel, Memphis, TN](#).**

### **William Kolb**

The Reverend Canon Kolb first came to Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, TN, in 1992, after 14 years as Rector of St. Thomas' Episcopal Church in Mamaroneck, New York. He returned in 2002 to head the Pastoral Care Program.

**For more information please go to: [William Kolb Bio](#) and [Calvary Episcopal Church, Memphis, TN](#).**

### **Renée Miller**

Renée Miller is an Episcopal priest who splits her time between her home in the Arizona desert and her condo in downtown Memphis. She currently serves as an associate rector at Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis, TN, contributes regularly to [explorefaith.org](#), and serves as a team leader for [CREDO](#) (Clergy Reflection, Education, Discernment, Opportunity).

**For more information please go to: [Renée Miller Bio](#).**

### **Mark W. Muesse**

Mark W. Muesse is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. A native of Waco, Texas, Muesse received his B.A. summa cum laude in English from Baylor University. He completed his graduate work at Harvard University, where he received a Masters of Theological Studies from the Divinity School and the A.M. and Ph.D. in The Study of Religion from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

**For more information please go to: [Mark Muesse Bio](#).**

### **Kathleen Norris**

Kathleen Norris is a recipient of grants from the Guggenheim and Bush Foundations. Her personal narratives, essays, and poetry have been published in a wide range of anthologies, magazines and journals, including *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times Magazine*. She has published five books of poetry, including *Little Girls in Church*, *How I Came to Drink My Grandmother's Piano*, and *The Year of Common Things*, and is author of the New York Times bestsellers *The Cloister Walk*, *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*, and *Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith*.

**For more information please go to: <http://www.barclayagency.com/norris.html>.**

### **Parker J. Palmer**

Parker Palmer is known for his work in education, spirituality and social change in institutions including schools, community organizations, primary, secondary and higher education, and business and corporations. He is author of six books, including *Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation* (2000), and *The Active Life: Wisdom for Work Creativity and Caring* (1990).

**For more information please go to: [Parker Palmer Bio](#).**

### **Lee Ramsey**

Lee Ramsey is an ordained United Methodist pastor and is currently an associate professor of pastoral care and pastoral theology at Memphis Theological Seminary. He holds advanced degrees from Candler School of Theology and Vanderbilt University and is the author of *Care-full Preaching: From Sermon to Caring Community*.

**For more information please go to: [Lee Ramsey Bio](#).**

### **Phyllis Tickle**

As Contributing Editor in Religion for *Publishers Weekly*, the international journal

of the book industry, Phyllis Tickle is frequently quoted in sources like *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Life*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *CNN*, *C-SPAN*, *PBS*, *BBC*, *VOA*, etc., Tickle is an authority on religion in America and a much sought-after lecturer on the subject. She is also author of some two dozen books, most of them about religion and spirituality, including *The Divine Hours*, a three-volume contemporary manual of prayer, *God-Talk in America*, and *The Shaping of a Life - A Spiritual Landscape*, a memoir of a life of prayer.

**For more information please go to: [Phyllis Tickle Bio](#) and [Phyllis Tickle's Website](#).**

### **Rowan Williams**

The Most Reverend Rowan Douglas Williams was selected to be the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury after serving as Bishop of Monmouth and Archbishop of Wales. Archbishop Williams has also served as a Dean of Clare College and Lecturer in Divinity at Cambridge University and as Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Oxford University. He has published collections of articles, sermons and poetry and written or edited more than twenty books on the history of theology and spirituality, most recently *Love's Redeeming Work: The Anglican Quest for Holiness* (Co-edited with Geoffrey Rowell and Kenneth Stevenson), *Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement* and a volume of reflections called *Writing in the Dust*, about his personal experience of September 11, 2001.

**For more information please go to: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org>.**

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