

This workbook belongs to

Cause me to hear Your loving kindness
in the morning, for in You do I trust;
cause me to know the way in which I
should walk, for I lift up my soul to You.

—*Psalm 143:8*



by Bronwen Henry

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Theme development: General Church Outreach

Author: Bronwen Henry

Message editors: Michelle Chapin, John Odhner, Sasha Silverman

Reflections contributors: Rachel Adams, Stephen Conroy, Sarah Gladish, Reade McCardell, Chelsea Odhner, Christina Orthwein, Frank Rose, Barrett Smith

Copy Editor: Bruce Henderson

Layout: Michelle Chapin, based on design by Serena Sutton

Cover Photographer: Kyle Genzlinger

Cover Design: Michelle Chapin

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Introduction

As a painter, I find there is something about opening up to the Divine whisper, to the Divine leading, to the Divine unfolding within each of us that is revealed for me at the canvas. For me ‘creativity’ is synonymous with experiencing God’s presence. Our practices of restoration, creativity and spirituality are so fully intertwined.

What is the life you dream of? What do you feel called to do? What do you think could transform your life? What would you like to make time and space for in your life? What practices help you experience God’s loving presence? How can you bring these practices into your life more frequently? These are the questions we will explore in this series.

This workbook includes the voices of many creative people in my life. What an honor it has been to interview people with practices in painting, photography, dance, music, poetry, meditation, and more. It was truly inspiring and humbling to hear about the beginnings, the curiosity, the overcoming barriers, the courage, and the rhythms of discipline and care present in each of these practices for each of these people.

My intention in this book is to nurture a conversation about creating habits, thought patterns, and systems that can help you to step into the life you really want.

In exploring these themes, you may choose to take a small step; it may be a baby step, but a step nonetheless. There is so much breadth and depth of wisdom in each story shared in this workbook. I know that you have great wisdom within you as well.

With any goal we set—whether to tame our anger, to eat healthier, to exercise more, to be on time—there is an invitation to grow and be steadfast in the face of anticipated barriers. There is something about setting an intention to do something that presents opportunities to face resistance and negativity. It challenges us to become courageous and trust in a power beyond (or perhaps within) us to overcome.

It is my hope that in exploring this content you might find the “umph”, the courage needed to discover, begin, restart, or continue an important practice in your life. This practice will take different forms for each of us, and will vary with time, yet each of us has the power to engage in a

fulfilling life, a life with curiosity, a life willing to move past resistance, a life of courage. The vitality of this movement in our lives can bring hope and joy to us and the people around us.

Although this workbook can certainly be used independently, it was created with group use in mind. We have all seen the benefit of working together with a friend or group on an intention or goal. We know that when there is accountability and care and encouragement we are more likely to succeed. So grab a few friends, and see how you can encourage one another in this effort today.

~ Bronwen

How to Use This Workbook

Working on expanding restorative practices has the power to change your life. As with any significant commitment, though, you will likely feel resistance at times. Support from others can make a big difference. For this reason, this workbook is designed to be used in a group setting. (See Appendix A for more information about how to lead a small group.) Please adapt the contents in whatever way works best for you. In each chapter you'll find the following elements:

- **Introduction & Reading:** Introduces the week's content and scriptural reading.
- **Activity:** Gets you thinking about how you'll apply the week's content to your own life. The activity is a great launch point for group discussion.
- **Daily Study:** Provides five days of readings and reflections to help inspire mindful communication (to be read outside of the group meeting.)

Creativity Journal

Every day, countless insights and questions arise. If we don't write anything down though, it's easy to let the insights slip away. A notebook or journal can be a great way to observe your thoughts related to the readings, group activities, our creative endeavors, and weekly practices. You may find that regular journaling helps release your mental clutter and opens you to inspiration.

Wherever you are is the entry point.

—*Kabir, Indian Poet*



WEEK ONE

Beginning



Beginning ¹

Small Group

Look for these grey boxes for small group application.

Begin your first small group meeting by taking time to introduce yourself. What is your intention/focus in participating in this series?

Together, review small group guidelines from Appendix A.

Offer a prayer or moment of meditation, then give everyone a chance to introduce themselves. Follow by reading aloud the introduction and scriptural focus. Give the group a chance to discuss the reading, and/or participate in the described activity in the following pages.

Introduction

Every single moment of a person's life, both of the understanding and of the will, is a new beginning.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 3854:3 Emanuel Swedenborg

We have so many opportunities to begin again. Beginning something new can be invigorating. It can also be terrifying. What does scripture teach us about beginnings? There is a lot of beauty to behold in every beginning. It is wonderful to see how God is present in it all, present in the joy and the struggle.

It helps to approach a new venture with humility, not fully knowing how the path will unfold. This brings lightness and joy, and also a sense of openness. In scripture we have beautiful images of light and dark being present together. This was depicted in the story of creation and we can anticipate the presence of light and dark in our re-creation and in any of our creative endeavors. We need not wait for a time that is all light.

One of the biggest challenges in beginning is the thought, “Where will I find the time?” Finding time can be hard, but it comes down to priorities. We might ask ourselves, “Where am I resting in my life? Am I slowing down enough to reconnect with God? Do I have time for pursuits of the heart? What do I have to give up to make time?” We can look at the words of Jesus in the following scriptural focus, as He honors a woman who sits rests rather than works, who focuses first on being present with Him before being busy: “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” (Luke 10:42).

In many ways opening to God’s presence, creativity, in our lives is challenging because our lives are so full. We are in such a hurry to get to the next thing, we are so distracted by screens and devices, that we miss the chances to be still and quiet. More than ever in the history of humanity do we have the option to numb out and escape our present moment. And yet we learn from scripture that this is not a completely new development. Even in the days Jesus walked the earth people found themselves too busy to spend time with Him. Consider this story and the lessons for us on our path.

Scriptural Focus: Creating Space

Jesus encouraging slowing down, resting, spending time in His presence.



Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.”

And Jesus answered and said to her, “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.”

—Luke 10:38-42

Discussion & Activity

Together as a group, discuss the questions, and participate in the activity listed.

Discussion Questions

- How is the busy factor of your life?
- Where could you find more stillness?
- What could you stop doing to create time for more restorative practices?

Group Activity

List 25 things that you would do in your dream life, if there were no limitations of time, money, travel, no constraints.

Choose Your Focus

Each week choose where you will put your focus. Sometimes sharing an intention with others can be an effective motivator.

Examples:

This week I will focus on spending 1 hour with my restorative practice at least 4 days this week.

This week I will focus on sharing my creative work with others.

This week I will begin each morning in meditation.

This week I will try out a new hobby I've always wanted to try.

This week I will focus on:

Now begins five days of readings for individual study.

Day One

Created to Create

The first words of the Bible, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void...” There is an important lesson here for us about God’s creation. In the beginning, there is a void. We don’t yet know how things will go. But out of this void, God creates life. Similarly, we can start right now. We don’t have to wait for the perfect time for spiritual practice, for experiencing God’s presence, or for creativity to begin. We don’t have to wait until there is only light and flow and goodness in our life. We can begin now. In the void. Right here. We can begin knowing God is doing the work, the creating, the bringing of peace and joy. We show up, do our practice and maybe God uses us to create something beautiful. Sometimes this showing up is in the face of crisis, in the face of great darkness.



In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

—Genesis 1:1-5



We are because God is.

—Divine Providence 46 Emanuel Swedenborg



I paint because of what it does to me spiritually. To get in touch with the part of me that wants to create.

—Frank Rose, Painter



We are created to create, that we need to create in order to truly fulfill the Lord’s plan in creating us. We are part of ‘the force’ of His creation. He produces all things of nature in His infinite providence. We are created in His image and therefore need to gather what we know from our understand-

Day Two

Act Precedes

We don't have to be ready. We can begin. We can lean into trust, that the desire and readiness will follow.



Act precedes, and willing follows; for that which we do from the understanding, we at last do from the will, and finally we put it on as a habit; and it is then instilled in our rational or inner self.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 4353, Emanuel Swedenborg

Stephen describes how he has to put himself in the path of inspiration.



I go out on walks four nights a week after dinner to take photos, and I shoot until the sun goes down. I try to make it a regular thing. One of the things about photography is you won't get any good shots by sitting on a couch. Like anything creative, you have to make yourself available to it. Part of my regular practice is making myself available to what nature brings—what is around me. It doesn't mean anything will happen on any given night. But if I don't go out, it won't happen.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer



Four years ago, I found ballroom dancing by accident. I was choreographing as part of my job as a high school dance teacher and I needed professional help with a musical that involved ballroom dancing. So my work paid for me to take ballroom lessons to choreograph the show. I almost immediately fell in love with it—I knew right away that this is what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. I completely shifted how I spent my time and money to try to fit it in my life. It was a huge gift the universe gave me. It was such a gift to know there is something that makes sense that I am supposed to be doing.

—Sarah Gladish, Ballroom Dancer



Start before you're ready.

—Steven Pressfield, Writer

Day Three

Pray and Ask

As we begin new endeavors, it is important to invite the Lord into the process.



Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

—John 3:16



We frequently read that the Lord answers when people call on Him or cry out to Him, and that He gives to people when they ask. Yet, even so, it is the Lord who gives people to ask and what they should ask for, and the Lord knows it, therefore, beforehand. But still it is the Lord's will that a person first ask, in order that the person may do so as though on his own.

—*Apocalypse Revealed* 376, Emanuel Swedenborg



How to Be a Poet

Make a place to sit down.
Sit down. Be quiet.
You must depend upon affection, reading, knowledge, skill—more of each than you have—inspiration, work, growing older, patience, for patience joins time to eternity. Any readers who like your poems, doubt their judgment.

Breathe with unconditional breath
the unconditioned air.
Shun electric wire.

Communicate slowly. Live a three-dimensional life; stay away from screens. Stay away from anything that obscures the place it is in. There are no unsacred places; there are only sacred places and desecrated places.

Accept what comes from silence. Make the best you can of it. Of the little words that come out of the silence, like prayers prayed back to the one who prays, make a poem that does not disturb the silence from which it came.

—Wendell Berry



To begin you must first look into your heart. What moves you? What touches you? Creativity always begins in the heart.

—Frank Rose, Painter



Be willing to be a beginner every single morning.

—Meister Eckhart, German Theologian

Individual Activity

Spend 5 minutes reflecting on the quote, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” (John 3:16).

Emphasizing different words each time you repeat it aloud or silently to yourself. This is a form of an ancient practice known as *lectio divina* where one holds scripture in meditation and prayer. Through repetition we gain deeper discovery of the message for our lives.

Day Four

Sabbath as a Gift

What if you believed that God wanted you to restore your soul? What if you believed in a God who thought rest was noble and worthwhile? Well this is just what scripture describes in the Hebrew Bible and the Ten Commandments. God literally commands that we are to remember the Sabbath. Not as a burden, but as a gift.



Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

—Exodus 20:8-11



I was very inspired by Wendell Berry's Sabbath walks. Every Sunday he would go for a Sabbath walk and he would write a poem. He would go into a meditative state. I was so inspired by that, that I started these walks. I felt in doing it I was seeing the world differently—new eyes, finding beauty everywhere I went. Then I started trying to write poetry through that, and it just wasn't flowing. Then after my wife had done a 365 challenge with photography, I thought maybe I'd pick up the camera and try that. I went on these walks with my camera. People saw my work and encouraged me to do more. I felt it was capturing the thing I was trying to capture with poetry in less verbal form. That is how it started. I go out and discover things, bring them back, and share them with people.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer



The best thing I can say about how I feel when I'm dancing is completely embodied. I don't remember anything else going on in the world besides the person I'm working with, whatever teacher or partner, the music, and my body. Later I come out of it and realize I didn't think

Day Five

Encouragement

There is something sacred and precious about beginnings. There is something powerful about being in a supportive community environment where people believe in you. This support and encouragement makes for rich soil from which our practices grow.



Behold I am making all things new.

—Revelation 21:5



Everyone has their own door. There is no wrong way to meditate. The other day I was doing meditation with my small group and one person says, “I’m doing it wrong. My mind won’t shut off.” That is exactly what is supposed to happen—your mind isn’t going to shut off. Then another person had this beautiful description of leaves floating down a river, and each thought placed on a leaf on that river. You aren’t shutting out your thoughts. You aren’t making your thoughts bad. You are just saying, “Oh, here you are. Put it on the stream and let it flow away.” No judgment.

—Rachel Adams, Meditation Practitioner



When I was growing up our family motto was “You can do anything”. This was a very liberating family motto. So many people get the opposite message. I was blessed with a stimulating environment. A house full of interesting people. Lots of freedom. Making a mess was not a problem. Our house was always a mess. When I started painting early on, I got a lot of positive feedback. People would say, “That is wonderful!” People liked what I did so I did more of it.

—Frank Rose, Painter



I have some dyslexia. In high school I started drawing. I had a friend whose mom was an artist. Seeing her gave me an example of what an artist can be, and helped mentor me. I thought maybe I could do this too. Then I just started doing it. It was a way to express myself. I learned art wasn’t just pretty pictures but ideas that allowed me to engage my brain and work in the style that was natural to it. Language is not natural

2

WEEK TWO

Curiosity



Curiosity²

Small Group

Open the group meeting with a prayer or moment of meditation. Follow with checking-in with how each person is doing today, and reporting how the past week's focus went for them.

Icebreaker: What do you love to learn and read about?

Introduction

Be curious about how God is working in your life. Be curious about what wants to unfold in your life? What inspirations do you feel? Do you have enough space and quiet to hear the inspiration? Inspiration literally means to take in breathe. To slow down and breathe. To be open to God's presence and leading. This week is about getting curious. Getting curious about how God is working in our life, and how God could be working in our life. Hearing this inspiration can help move us out of times of apathy and discouragement. Curiosity can help us move through a lack of clarity about direction. A lack of passion. We can also be curious about the struggles and aversions in our lives. When we get curious we become alert to the gentle inspirations from God. And by virtue of being alive we are invited to respond to these moments of inspiration and take action. Following curiosity is one form of trusting in providence

Scriptural Focus: Living Water

When Jesus approaches a Samaritan woman and asks for water it is a surprising moment for her. Usually Jews and Samaritans don't interact. The woman questions Jesus' choice in doing this and they end up in a

conversation about water. Though Jesus quickly elevates the conversation to a message of the heart and a pursuit of the soul. What is it we seek? What will sustain us for the full journey of life?



A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

—John 4: 7-15



"Coming to drink" means the affection for the truths [because] it implies thirst, and "thirst" in the Word means appetite and desire, and so the affection for knowing and taking in truth.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 4017, Emanuel Swedenborg

Discussion Questions

- What is an activity that makes you feel alive?
- Where is an area of your life you are longing for more vitality?
- Finish these sentences:
 I feel happiest when....
 What I long for most in life is....
 I admire people who....

Group Activity

On a separate sheet of paper, list 100 things you LOVE. Get curious about what you love and how it lights you up. As a group share five things you wrote down. What surprised you? Was this easy or hard to list 100?

Choose Your Focus

Each week choose where you will put your focus. Sometimes sharing an intention with others can be an effective motivator.

This week I will focus on:

Day One

Unexpected Presence

Where are we searching for God's presence? Where do we imagine God will show up in our lives? Maybe we expect the Divine One to show up in one place and yet another area of life is filled with energy. Imagine Moses' surprise to come across a burning bush. His fear and trepidation.



Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian. And he led the flock to the back of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush does not burn."

So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!"

And he said, "Here I am."

Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

—Exodus 3:1-5



One of my main maxims is that there is always something beautiful right in front of me, if I only have the eyes to see it. There is always something, wherever you are. It doesn't matter where you are, somewhere right in front of you. Right here is something beautiful.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer



I used to get afraid that opportunities would dry up. But I have been feeling I can trust the process and know that more opportunities will come again. I know how to make the time. And I can do so as opportunities open up.

—Chelsea Rose Odhner, Writer

Day Two

Look Within

So often we look in the empty places for God's presence. We long for comfort and love and find ourselves searching. Scripture has powerful teachings for us about this. Teaching that the peace, the comfort, the joy we seek—what one might call heaven—is within us. How can this be? What is the meaning of this? How does this impact our view of ourself and our potential?



Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

—Luke 17:20-21



It can never be said that the Heaven is outside of anyone.

—*Heaven and Hell* 54 Emanuel Swedenborg



I find in our society we are looking for happiness. We are looking to solve a problem. We are looking to find peace. But all of that God has put in us. We just have to open to it and find it.

—Rachel Adams, Meditation Practitioner



The single most important thing for me in terms of getting fulfillment out of dancing is putting one foot in front of the other, regardless of how I think it will turn out. I think that is such a common thing for anyone doing anything creative or big with their life. The courage to step into the darkness over and over again. It feels insanely true. Everytime. I can't take three steps forward, I take one. And mostly into the dark. I find it to be a miracle I'm still on this path without knowing the way or how it will go.

—Sarah Gladish, Dancer



All humans have a real deep desire to be creative. But hardly any are aware of that.

—Frank Rose, Painter

Day Three

God is Always Present

If God's love is always present, can we see it? Let's get curious and open to seeing God's presence in our lives.



Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to You.

—Psalm 139:7-12



Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

—Psalm 111:2



Internal people are like eagles soaring aloft and seeing all things spread out beneath them.

—*True Christian Religion* 839, Emanuel Swedenborg,



This is my main meditation practice. Being out on my Sabbath walks, turning off my language mind, breathing, seeing, fully present to what is around me.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer



Art goes in a sequence. I didn't know 40 years ago that I would be painting mountain scenes in Arizona. You start on the journey. You start doing things. Then you get there and say, "I think I'll go here next"—a place you'd never thought of at the beginning. It evolves naturally, like the growth of a tree. It follows light. It bends. And the result is beautiful thing. In our life we look back and say, "My creativity evolved in a way I did not expect" and it is beautiful to see how it happened.

— Frank Rose, Painter

Day Four

Searching

What we value, we search for. Light a candle. Bring care, attention, light to your life.



What woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?

— Luke 15:8



Take time to smell the flowers. Walk through a meadow with a child—watching, listening, smelling, feeling. Sit for a time in a woods on a sunlit summer afternoon. Climb on the rocks by the sea and watch the crashing waves or poke in the tidal pools. Fly a kite and make up stories about the cloud pictures. Lie down in the cool grass and wait for the stars to come out.

—Beth Johns, Author and Artist



If someone told me 20 years ago that I'd be spending my retirement publishing books on nature, I'd think, "No way. I don't know how to do that." I followed the lead. It is important to follow your artistic nose and see where it leads. And often it leads to unexpected places.

—Frank Rose, Painter



I don't always feel amazing after playing the cello. My expectation is not that I will play easily or well, but that I'll steadily improve. It's still a drag to practice some days. I'm working my butt off at it, and I don't have the raw talent. But it is magical. If I work hard, I get better. Every once in awhile I work hard, play hard, and it sounds good and I'm so proud. I get this feeling of, "I did that!" My goal is not to perform. I play for the love of it.

—Christina Orthwein, Potter & Beginner Cellist



Don't forget to look around and enjoy the fall trees; I recommend you stop running for a moment and just take it in.

—Barrett Smith, Painter & Runner

Day Five

Being Led

Curiosity is all about openness and being willing to be led by inspiration.



Since innocence is being led by the Lord and not by ourselves, all the people who are in heaven are in innocence, since all the people who are there love to be led by the Lord.

—*Heaven and Hell* 280, Emanuel Swedenborg



The core of creativity is innocence. The willingness to be led. To put yourself in a position where you can be led. Where spirit can move you from place to place, from one creative subject to the next.

—Frank Rose, Painter



I wasn't very good at ceramics when I started. I was a talented artist, but pointedly not good at ceramics. I couldn't get the clay centered for days. Now that I'm a teacher, it is very helpful that I wasn't good in the beginning. When I see students struggling, I am able to convey "I struggled too, but look at me now." I love having that perspective. It is the same with cello. I know I'm not great, but I know that hard work will help me get better.

—Christina Orthwein, Potter



Consider how this painter holds curiosity still even through a long career. What does this longing for discovery teach you about your path?

Now that art is my job, making it new and inspiring becomes a little bit harder. But painting is still the place where my brain works the smoothest. In a lot of ways I view my work as experiments. I come up with a list of ideas I want to try and throw them up on the panel to see if they work or not. I come up with the very best solution I can with that panel. I often have the same pose in two very different paintings. I use the same patterns over and over again because I'm trying to discover something new about these ideas. That is when the real challenge and creativity comes in.

—Barrett Smith, Painter & Runner



WEEK THREE



Resistance



Resistance

Small Group

Open the group meeting with a prayer or moment of meditation. Follow with checking-in with how each person is doing today, and reporting how the past week's focus went for them.

Icebreaker: What is a recurring barrier for you in your efforts?

Introduction

When something beautiful is underway we should expect resistance. When you feel resistance, know that nothing is wrong. Do not beat yourself up for these feelings, expect them. This is the natural course of things. See if you can think of one story from scripture that doesn't involve a challenge, a setback, a hardship. You can't. Because scripture is about our inner lives and our inner lives are filled with barriers, setbacks, challenges. Knowing this pattern and expecting it will help us to become less attached, stuck or hindered by these naturally occurring obstacles. All of life is about transformation and overcoming. This is expressed beautifully by author Martha Beck: "There are infinite passage-ways out of the shadows, infinite vehicles to transport us into the light."



There are many things that threaten my practice. Finance, injury, time. It is easy for me to live in fear of those barriers.

—Sarah Gladish, Dancer

Scriptural Focus: Wilderness

Expect temptation and discouragement. Immediately after Jesus is baptized, what was likely a beautiful moment, He is tempted in the wilderness. This juxtaposition of beauty and struggle is to be expected.



When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterward He was hungry. Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread."

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down. For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'"

Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

—Matthew 3: 16-17, 4: 4-11

Discussion Questions

- Where do you feel resistance to your restorative practices? What are some of the thoughts that make you want to give up? What are the thoughts that help keep you going?
- Can you think of a time right after you made progress or took a step and then you were challenged?
- What do you feel is at risk when you pursue your practice?

Group Activity

As a group, write out some excuses you find yourselves making around your creativity or goals. What themes emerge in these excuses? Which of these are valid? Which feel easy to dispel? Do you have any in common with each other? Which require support or help from another person? Brainstorm together words/phrases/actions to refute these excuses.

Choose Your Focus

Each week choose where you will put your focus. Sometimes sharing an intention with others can be an effective motivator.

This week I will focus on:

Day One

Anxious Anticipation

Before we begin something our unrest is to be expected. When we get into flow and joy we come into a state peace.



Before we are created anew, we are in an anxious and restless state. . . . but as soon as the good of love has been implanted, the fighting stops, and rest ensues. Thus we are in peace.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 8893 Emanuel Swedenborg



Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, Poet



I notice a total difference in my life when I make time to meditate. Without this practice I'm in my head, I'm rushing. I feel it in my jaw, I'm clenching my teeth. I have very high tension and extremely task oriented; I have to get things done, racing around to the next thing. I'm literally twirling, my head is spinning.

—Rachel Adams, Meditation Practitioner



Anxiety is the handmaiden of creativity

—T. S. Elliot, Author

Day Two

Facing Fear

A regular part of resistance is fear. Sometimes acknowledging that fear helps.



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

—John 14:27



“Procrastination is not Laziness”, I tell him. “It is fear. Call it by its right name, and forgive yourself.”

—Julia Cameron, Artist, Author



You may think that you’ve lost your passion, or that you can’t identify it, or that you have so much of it, it threatens to overwhelm you. None of these is true. Fear saps passion. When we conquer our fears, we discover a boundless, bottomless, inexhaustible well of passion.

—Steven Pressfield, Writer



I love working on my craft (song writing and what-have-you) but I definitely struggle motivating myself to get to it. It’s especially discouraging when a good bit of time passes and I haven’t worked on a new tune or practiced older ones.

—Reade McCardell, Singer-songwriter

Day Three

Making Excuses

There are many excuses for not stepping into our restorative practices. Perhaps one of the most powerful is our sense of inadequacy.



Moses pleaded with the Lord, "O Lord, I'm not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though You have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled." Then the Lord asked Moses, "Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say." But Moses again pleaded, "Lord, please! Send anyone else." Then the Lord became angry with Moses. "All right," he said. "What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he speaks well. And look! He is on his way to meet you now. He will be delighted to see you."

—Exodus 4:10-14



Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads towards an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him, they are at peace, since they fear nothing and no anxiety about things to come disturbs them.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 8445, Emanuel Swedenborg



Imperfections are not inadequacies; they are reminders that we're all in this together.

—Brené Brown, Author



I remember many years ago a watercolor teacher became a friend of mine. He would check on me to see how my pieces were coming. I'd say, "I'm having painter's block. I can't paint." He would come out and ask me what I was going to paint. I wouldn't know. We would get in his van. He would drive the van with all our art supplies, and we'd go half a mile. He'd stop the van and say, "Wow. Look at that." And he'd start painting. And I'd be thinking, "What is there to paint? Well, he is

Day Four

Good Enough

When we acknowledge that we were created by God, when we greet our shortcomings with kindness, when we take note of the risk involved, these can help to overcome the question “Am I good enough?” When we remember we are vessels of the Lord’s work, there is a freedom from the doubt



You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb.

—Psalm 139:13



Let me think about the people I love and care about the most. And how when they fail, or disappoint me I still love them, I still give them chances and I still see the best in them. Let me extend that generosity to myself.

—Ze Frank, Artist and Humorist



I get in the practice of putting things out there that aren’t perfect and to live with the consequences. What I’ve found is that over time what has evolved is that my worst photos now are just as good as my best old photos.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer



Writing feels like a risk. I’m always questioning if it is good. What will people think? It comes in waves: feeling a sense of freedom, then getting more blocked, and coming back to sense of permission. I remember feeling bound up during my college years. I felt somehow self-conscious and buried. Mentors helped me through this. They helped me hold onto that part of me that loves to write. Writing is something between me and the Lord. When I write I am being who I am.

—Chelsea Rose Odhner, Writer



One of the biggest things I’ve struggled with is confidence in the whole process. It was affecting the way I was approaching lessons, my posture, my ability to focus in competition. It was a huge spiritual journey. To find somewhere in myself where I could be confident. I’m much more confident these days with support from life coaches

Day Five

Doubt

We may each feel in our lives at different times a profound sense of doubt. When we can acknowledge the doubt, and invite the Lord into the process we can break through some of the greatest barriers.



Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

—Mark 9:23,24



I used to meet with a friend who was also a painter on a fairly regular basis and paint. He kept asking me, "Is this good?" and finally I said to him "Not until you can tell it is good, you'll never be a painter. Until you are able to look at your work, have doubts, and also know that those doubts are telling you something needs to change. No one else can really judge your work. They can respond to your work and give you thoughts. But ultimately you have to constantly doubt yourself in order to do good work. Doubt is important part of process. Some people allow the doubt to cripple/stop them before they get to point of success. To me, the great thing is that feeling when you've done something and you know it is good. And you don't need other people to tell you it is good, but you love hearing it anyway.

—Frank Rose, Painter



Your body will argue there is no justifiable reason to continue. Your only recourse is to call on your spirit, which fortunately functions independently of logic.

—Tim Noakes, Sports Medicine Professor



WEEK FOUR



Courage



Courage

Small Group

Open the group meeting with a prayer or moment of meditation. Follow with checking-in with how each person is doing today, and reporting how the past week's focus went for them.

Icebreaker: Who is a favorite display of courage in a movie or book?

Introduction

This journey to open to the life we want takes courage. It will take effort and determination. We will have to give up some old habits and make space for this new practice. "Do not fear" is one of the most common phrases in the Bible. Why? Probably because God knew we'd be afraid. Another common phrase is "remember". What are we to remember? Perhaps that we are connected with God. Perhaps to look to God. Perhaps that we are Children of God. Part of finding courage is remembering this connection is moving forward with focus and determination.

Scriptural Focus: Standing Up

Overcoming resistance takes courage. Here Deborah shows focus and strength in the face of a leader, Sisera, who is enslaving the Children of Israel.



Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, was judging Israel at that time. And she would sit under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in

the mountains of Ephraim. And the children of Israel came up to her for judgment. Then she sent and called for Barak the son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, "Has not the Lord God of Israel commanded, 'Go and deploy troops at Mount Tabor; take with you ten thousand men of the sons of Naphtali and of the sons of Zebulun; and against you I will deploy Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude at the River Kishon; and I will deliver him into your hand?'"

And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!"

So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Then Deborah arose and went with Barak to Kedesh. And Barak called Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; he went up with ten thousand men under his command, and Deborah went up with him.

Now Heber the Kenite, of the children of Hobab the father-in-law of Moses, had separated himself from the Kenites and pitched his tent near the terebinth tree at Zaanaim, which is beside Kedesh.

And they reported to Sisera that Barak the son of Abinoam had gone up to Mount Tabor. So Sisera gathered together all his chariots, nine hundred chariots of iron, and all the people who were with him, from Harosheth Hagoyim to the River Kishon.

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Up! For this is the day in which the Lord has delivered Sisera into your hand. Has not the Lord gone out before you?" So Barak went down from Mount Tabor with ten thousand men following him. And the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and all his army with the edge of the sword before Barak; and Sisera alighted from his chariot and fled away on foot. But Barak pursued the chariots and the army as far as Harosheth Hagoyim, and all the army of Sisera fell by the edge of the sword; not a man was left.

—Judges 4:4-16

Discussion Questions

- When do you struggle to be courageous?
- Describe a courageous moment in your life where you stepped out of normal expectations.
- What would it look like for you to be brave today?

Group Activity

Courage can look different at different times. As a group discuss these actions which ones appear courageous? Why? Why not?

1. Fighting or walking away from a fight.
2. Participating or not participating.
3. Keeping silent or speaking up.
4. Blaming others for your mistakes or accepting responsibility.
5. Helping others or looking out for yourself.
6. Quitting or working hard even when it is difficult.
7. Beginning. Stopping.

After the discussion ask, "How do you feel called to be courageous? How is it different or similar to what you would expect of "courage"?"

Choose Your Focus

Each week choose where you will put your focus. Sometimes sharing an intention with others can be an effective motivator.

This week I will focus on:

Day One

Do Not Be Afraid

In the Bible the phrase “Do not be afraid” is found many times. It is likely this encouragement is offered so often because our Creator knew we’d be inclined towards fear.



Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

—Joshua 1:9



Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

—John 14:27



Vulnerability is the birthplace of innovation, creativity and change.

—Dr. Brené Brown, Scholar, Author



Fear is always triggered by creativity, because creativity asks you to enter into realms of an uncertain outcome. And fear hates an uncertain outcome. This is nothing to be ashamed of. It is, however, something to be dealt with.

—Elizabeth Gilbert, Writer



Do I feel “good enough” at my practice? Some days, absolutely. Some days, hell no.

—Reade McCardell, Singer-songwriter

Day Two

Step Out

What does it look like to follow the Lord? To step out of our comfort zone?



Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

—Matthew 14: 22-33



Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

—Martin Luther King Jr. , Minister and Civil Rights Activist



When we least expect it, life sets us a challenge to test our courage and willingness to change; at such a moment, there is no point in pretending that nothing has hap-

Day Three

Remember the Work is the Lord's

Remembering the work that we are doing is the Lord's work can give us courage.



Many experiences have shown me that all joy and happiness in heaven come from the Lord alone. At this point, let me recount just one such experience.

I saw that certain angelic spirits, using the greatest possible care, were making an ornate lamp stand, with its lamps and flowers, in the Lord's honor. For an hour or two I was allowed to observe how hard they worked to make absolutely everything beautiful and full of significance. They felt that the labor was their own, but I was able to sense clearly that they could invent nothing by their own power.

Finally, several hours later, they said they had succeeded in making a gorgeous lamp stand, with all its representative art, in honor of the Lord, and at this they rejoiced from the depths of their being. I told them, however, that at no time had they designed or created anything on their own but that it was the Lord alone who had done this for them. At first they were scarcely willing to believe it, but being angelic spirits, they received enlightenment and confessed that it was so.

The same is true for all their other representative objects, for all their feelings and thoughts without exception, and so for heavenly joy and happiness; the least of them all come from the Lord alone.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 552, Emanuel Swedenborg



The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.

—Psalm 24:1



One isn't necessarily born with courage, but one is born with potential. Without courage, we cannot practice any other virtue with consistency. We can't be kind, true, merciful, generous, or honest.

—Maya Angelou, American Poet and Civil Rights Activist



Art shows me that I only have the ability to say yes or no to what comes before me, everything else is God. I'm not the creator of the rest of the world/reality.

—Barrett Smith, Painter & Runner



Life is not as complicated as it appears. Essentially God is flowing into us all the time. God is our life and we just don't know it. Life is about moving from false self to true self, and learning that God flows into our true self.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer



When I give myself permission to be in the moment and give form to thoughts and feelings— it is such a fun, cathartic, therapeutic process of composition. When my writing is meaningful for someone else and helps them on their journey, that is amazing. That is what I love about writing. I know it works for me. When I read others' writing, it speaks to me. It is so cool to participate in that with other people.

—Chelsea Rose Odhner, Writer

Reflection

What is something you are holding and stressing over that isn't in your control?

Day Four

Take Risks

What does it look like to take risks and use the gifts we've been given? How are we called to do our best? To try hard?



For [the kingdom of heaven] will be like a person going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, "Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, "Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more." His master said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master." He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, "Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours." But his master answered him, "You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

—Matthew 25:14-30



We need to remember that each of us is a unique part of the 'force' of the Lord's creation. He wants us to enjoy what He has given us, using our individual talents to enhance it.

—Beth Johns, Author and Artist



Sometimes I have this strong experience in the world. It adds meaning to write it out and give it form on a page. I remember being bedside, visiting someone when she was dying of cancer, similar to the brain tumor my mom faced. I got to sit by her bedside with other people— people holding space. And it was such a full, rich moment. I remember going home and thinking, "I have to write this down." I ended up publishing this piece, and when people read it they told me how moved they were. What I wrote reached across time and space and was meaningful to other people. That experience gives me courage to keep writing.

—Chelsea Rose Odhner, Writer

Reflection

How might you be holding yourself back?

Day Five

Acceptance

Perhaps one of the most courageous moments in the Bible is when Mary learns from the Angel Gabriel that she will be pregnant with the Lord. In this moment she could have panicked and yet she articulates acceptance and a courage to walk this path. What do we feel the Lord inviting us to do? How are we being called to serve? Are we willing to accept this path?



Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

— Luke 1:38



Every time you express a complaint about how difficult and tiresome it is to be creative, inspiration takes another step away from you, offended.

— Elizabeth Gilbert, Author



I realized this may be a lifelong practice, this is not a passing thing. I feel a responsibility to recognize my gifts and cultivate and share them with the world. And that not from an obligatory sense, but from a sense of love and joy. I really want to cultivate this and share it with people. And people respond well. It is adding something to the world that isn't there. I am committed—it is a very joyful thing for me.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer



WEEK FIVE



Step Into Providence



Step Into 5 Providence

Small Group

Open the group meeting with a prayer or moment of meditation. Follow with checking-in with how each person is doing today, and reporting how the past week's focus went for them.

Icebreaker: Describe an experience when you were so engaged in life you lost track of time.

Introduction

Creating the life you want takes commitment. It takes time. It takes trust. It takes curiosity, courage and perseverance. There are moments of expansion and times of contractions. It follows different seasons. What does it look like to find your rhythm? How do you take daily actions to support your goals? What are the simple ways you stay focused? How do you let go and trust in providence? How do you keep showing up and inviting the Lord into the process?

With time your new practice will gain rhythm and flow. And it will take discipline. These together. Showing up. And letting providence carry you. God is doing the work. And don't wait idly for the inspiration. Make time for the inspiration. Begin again and again. Return to curiosity. Expect resistance. Summon courage. Every moment of our lives is carried by providence, even when it doesn't feel like it. The Lord is working in every way to bring your life to a beautiful place. Accept that flow.

Scriptural Focus: Faith in Simple Steps

Sometimes, though we long for big beautiful steps and transformation in our lives and in our creative process, what presents itself before us appears simple and ordinary.



Then Naaman went with his horses and chariot, and he stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean." But Naaman became furious, and went away and said, "Indeed, I said to myself, 'He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy.' Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. And his servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean?'" So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

—2 Kings 5:9-14

Discussion & Activity

Discussion Questions

- What routines have you begun? How have you seen providence at work during this series? What has evolved for you?
- What intention would you like to set today going forward?

Group Activity

What simple phrase might ground your effort and intention going forward? How can you step forward with faith? You might play soft, inspiring music while people brainstorm. Create a note card/reminder for yourself of this simple phrase. Decorate it if you are inspired!

Day One

Commit to the Process

When we show up and when we commit to an effort, there is a blessing.



But this is what I commanded them, saying, “Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.”

—Jeremiah 7:23



Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too.

—William Hutchison Murray, Scottish Mountaineer and Writer



Sometimes I find I have to trick myself into working. There are always so many things to do besides paint. If I didn't use certain tricks I would never paint. I know people very different from me. They get up in morning—paint and paint all day, seven days a week. I'm not like that. There is an inertia. It is hard to get started. I need to protect my creative time. So I say to myself “You have to paint from 10-11.” And I get all my materials ready to go. I take a bathroom break beforehand, and I get music going. Then I'll set a timer and I cannot get up from the art table until the timer goes off. You think this would be a recipe for disaster, but I do some of my best work under these conditions.

—Frank Rose, Painter



Commitment is acceptance I can't do it all. By limiting my freedom I gain something. Commitment is freedom. Commitment is integrating my practices into my life at regular intervals. Commitment is saying “Sorry, I can't do coffee then. I'm busy,” and then spending that time with your practices. Commitment is acceptance that I am practicing and growing and the more I practice, the more I will be able to give back.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer

Day Two

Small Gestures

Life can feel completely overwhelming. And yet, when we reach out to God in our lives, even the smallest gestures. God is immediately present with us. May we continue to make these gestures regularly. May we be open to God's daily presence in our lives.



Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.

—Matthew 5:25-29



I suppose advice I would offer someone is something about enjoying the process (yeah, that dusty old chestnut) and looking at each small step as a success.

—Reade McCardell, Singer-songwriter



What you do every day matters more than what you do once in a while.

—Gretchen Rubin, Author

Day Three

Together with God

Your desire to create a life that is beautiful, peaceful and joyful reflects the fact that you are created in God's image. Everything good you do will be in that connection with God.



So God created humankind in God's image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

—Genesis 1:27



I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.

—John 15:5



With God all things are possible.

—Matthew 19:26



I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.

—Philippians 4:13



As you move toward a dream, the dream moves toward you.

—Julia Cameron, Author, Artist, Poet



Creativity happens in and through me, sometimes, but it isn't something I 'do'. God or Spirit or whatever you want to call it 'does' creativity. As soon as I try to do creativity that is when I get screwed up, I get stuck. Right now, I don't do competitions. Because if I go there thinking it is for a competition, my world becomes very small and I am blocked. The whole reason I'm doing this practice is to be in expansive spaciousness, to be connected, flowing, losing my language mind. To be free.

—Stephen Conroy, Photographer

Day Four

Do Your Part

Yes providence is all about God and God's work. And we are part of the process. We have to put ourselves out there. It is truly all God and we have to be open to God's work.



Give and it will be given to you.

—Luke 6:38



Someone wise is a person who is moved by love to put truths into practice.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 10331, Emanuel Swedenborg



The peace I get for five minutes of sitting is so worth the effort. What distracts me from taking these five minutes?

Everything. Playing solitaire game on my phone? Or reading emails? Online shopping? I could give an hour to shopping, and yet sometimes we say we are too busy for minutes of meditation. It is about prioritizing. Meditation is life-giving, freeing, peaceful, and worth the effort.

—Rachel Adams, Meditation Practitioner



All you can do is to do your best.

—Charlotte Dujardin, Dressage Rider

Day Five

Stream of Providence

What would it look like to step into the stream of Providence, to let our habits, or lives, be carried by love?



[The Lord] leads a person as silently as an imperceptible stream or favoring current bears a vessel along.

—*Divine Providence* 186, Emanuel Swedenborg



When the Lord is with you, He leads you and makes provision so that all that happens, whether sad or joyful, may bring you what is good.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 6303, Emanuel Swedenborg



Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads toward an end that is good. When a person believes these things about Him, the person is at peace, fears nothing and no anxiety about things to come disturbs the person. How far a person attains this state depends on how far the person attains love to the Lord. Everything bad, especially trust in self, takes away the state of peace.

—*Secrets of Heaven* 8455, Emanuel Swedenborg



My writing practice isn't always the same measure of frequency. I trust the variations of time, that this is an ongoing practice for me, even though it goes through seasons. I have springs and summers. It goes dormant for a while, and that is okay. I don't have to feel afraid. In the past I would fear, "When will I ever write again?" I don't feel that anymore; I feel more at peace with the ebb and flow of the work. I am aware of and I pay attention to how things feel. And if I get too bound up inside, I know that I really need to give my practice more time and space. It brings me back into balance.

—Chelsea Rose Odhner, Writer



For me, running equals freedom. But sometimes running equals total freedom.

—Barrett Smith, Painter & Runner

Congratulations!

Well Done!

You stuck with your focus and intention on this series for five weeks. Now take a moment to celebrate.

When you find that you've moved past resistance, a hurdle, or an obstacle, make sure to celebrate!



Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the Lord, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

—Exodus 15:20-21

Our Efforts Can Positively Impact Others

Know that your efforts and intentions are important. And can positively impact others.



I think it's hard to quantify how much creativity impacts the world. It makes us happier as individuals, which makes us treat the people around us better. Also, of course, it betters the art we're putting out into the world!

—Reade McCardell, Singer-songwriter



My practice has had a really positive effect on my whole life and relationships, because I am happier. I am able to be there for other people going through big decisions about careers and creative outlets, and I feel I have something to offer. Sometimes it isn't so simple and it can be a struggle. And yet, I have seen my creative expansion to be inspiring to my students—they can see what it looks like for someone to reach for a goal and work hard for it.

—Sarah Gladish, Dancer

What Next?

Keep going! Use this momentum. Get a new friend involved. Stay connected with your small group. Find a local or online community to support your ongoing efforts and accountability.

Give Back!

You've reached the end of the CREATE program. Of course, we know it's never really the end; we hope to look always for opportunities to stretch and challenge ourselves, and to have an open-mind to take risks and put ourselves out there. Thank you for joining us on this journey, and we hope that you had a positive experience.

Please complete the survey at the end of the appendix (or take the on-line survey at www.surveymonkey.com/journeyparticipant). The information gathered from these surveys will help us serve you better.

Appendices

Appendix A

How To Run a Small Group

For each meeting, bring your workbook. Come a few minutes early so that you have time for fellowship with others in your group before beginning the meeting.

Small Group Meeting Format (60-90 Minutes):

- 1) **Opening Prayer/Silence** — Start each group with a prayer and/or 1-3 minutes of silence/noticing breathing (5 minutes)
- 2) **Check-In** — After the prayer, give each group member a chance to share about how they are doing. Then ask if anyone would like to share anything that came up for them during the previous week's challenge. (About 15 minutes)
- 3) **Icebreaker and Readings** — Read the introduction aloud with the group, then the Scriptural Focus.* Give the group members a chance to respond to the readings and/or the provided discussion questions. (15-20 minutes).
- 4) **Group Activity** — Participate in the described group activity. (20 minutes)
- 5) **Focus** — Give participants a chance to brainstorm and share their own creative challenge they will work on in the coming week. (5-10 minutes)
- 6) **Closing Comments** — Go around the room, giving each person the opportunity to make any closing comments. (10-15 minutes)
- 7) **Prayer Requests, and a Closing Prayer** — Ask anyone if they have anything they would like the group to pray about. Then have either the leader or a group member close the meeting with a prayer, acknowledging the prayer requests. (5 minutes)

**Consider asking group members if they would like to be in charge of a particular week, either to lead the group from the workbook or to bring their own reading, video, or presentation idea.*

Small Group Guidelines

The following guidelines help create a safe, supportive environment. If you'd like, invite your group to create its own guidelines:

1. We do not give unsolicited advice.
2. We speak only for ourselves.
3. We share; we do not preach.
4. We have the option to pass.
5. We keep confidentiality.
6. We seek to stay within time limits so everyone has a chance to share.
7. We practice speaking true, kind, and useful words.

Time Frame

With your group, decide on the time frame for your weekly meetings. We suggest a minimum of 90 minutes.

Bring your talents!

Think about what you enjoy—whether it's baking, singing, researching, reading aloud, or coming up with group activities to benefit others. Work with your small group leader to find ways your talent might enhance the group experience.

Appendix B

Scriptural Works Cited

New International Version Study Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

New King James Version Holy Bible. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.

Swedenborg, Emanuel. *Apocalypse Revealed*. [1785-1789] Trans. N. Bruce Rogers. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2007.

_____. *Divine Providence*. [1764] Trans. George Dole. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2003.

_____. *Heaven and Hell*. [1758] Translated by George Dole. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000.

_____. *Secrets of Heaven*. [1749-1756] Translated by Lisa Hyatt Cooper. 12 volumes. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2000.

_____. *True Christianity*. [1771] 2 volumes. Translated by Jonathan S. Rose. West Chester, PA: Swedenborg Foundation, 2006-2011.

Other Helpful Books and Resources

Artists Way by Julie Cameron

Artists Way for Work by Julie Cameron

War of Art by Steve Pressfield

Do the Work by Steve Pressfield

While the Heart Waits by Sue Monk Kidd

Bird by Bird by Anne Lamott

Vein of Gold by Julie Cameron

Given, Poems by Wendell Berry

Head, Hearts, Hands by Beth Johns

Appendix C

About Emanuel Swedenborg

While this workbook draws on quotes from great thinkers from around the world and across the centuries, many of the quotes come from the following books by Emanuel Swedenborg:

- **Heaven and Hell:** Describes how heaven (connection with God and others) and hell (disconnection from God and others) are open to us at all times, leaving us in freedom to choose the environment in which we want to live.
- **True Christianity:** Offers a new kind of Christianity—one that embraces the good in all religions, and encourages people to live a life of service to the neighbor.
- **Secrets of Heaven:** Offers a phrase-by-phrase analysis of the symbolic meaning of the first two books of the Bible, and includes descriptions of heaven.
- **Divine Providence:** Describes how God (love and wisdom) operates in our lives, keeping us in freedom while constantly drawing us toward love and toward heaven.
- **Apocalypse Revealed:** Offers an explanation of the meaning behind Revelation, an often confusing and abstract book of the Bible, and how it applies to our daily lives and relationship with God.

Who Was Emanuel Swedenborg?

Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) was a brilliant Swedish scientist, philosopher and theologian. Although he had become well-known for his inventions and scientific contributions, he experienced a profound spiritual awakening that changed the course of his life. Swedenborg wrote that God allowed him to understand a higher reality within and beyond the natural world. Impassioned by this inner awakening, Swedenborg devoted the later half of his life to sharing what has come to be called a “new Christianity.” His many books are centered on themes of truth and kindness brought into useful action. Watch the following video to learn more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HEa0e8AcS78>



Appendix D

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done,*

as in heaven, so upon the earth.

*Give us this day, our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts*

as we also forgive our debtors.

*And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.*

*For Thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever.*

Amen.

—Matthew 6:9-13

Appendix E

CREATE Evaluation Form

We appreciate your feedback and we will consider it in the development of future programs. All evaluations are confidential; you will not be contacted unless you request it. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey on the following pages!

To return the form

You can give us your feedback in any of the following ways:

- Fill out the form on the following pages, and give it to your leader
- Take the survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/journeyparticipant
- Send us your comments over email: newchurchjourney@gmail.com
- Mail to: General Church Outreach P.O. Box 743 Bryn Athyn PA, 19009

EVALUATION FORM

CREATE

DATE _____ YOUR LOCATION _____

YOUR AGE

- Under 18 18-35 36-60 Over 60

HOW DID YOU FIRST HEAR ABOUT THIS PROGRAM?

- Newspaper Banner outside the church
 From a friend Announcement at church
 Mailing Website
 Other (please specify): _____

HOW DID YOU PARTICIPATE?

- With an in-person small group With an online group
 Independently With a marriage group
 Other (please specify): _____

ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE

What is your experience with the New Church and New Church teachings? (Are you a life-long member, or did you recently find the church?)

What did you find to be the strengths of this program?

If you participated in a small group, what was something you gained from your small group experience?

What elements of this program could be improved?

What types of programs would you like to see in the future?

SHARE YOUR STORY

Would you like to be contacted to share your story? Yes

If yes, please fill out the following contact information. *Thank you!*

Name _____

Phone number _____

Email _____

Address _____

GIVING BACK

Would you like to donate to support future programs? Yes

If yes, please go to www.newchurchjourney.org and click on "donate." Be sure to mention "Journey" in the comments. Or, send your check to General Church Outreach, P.O. Box 743 Bryn Athyn, PA 19009. Please mention "Journey Program" in the description. *Thank you!*

