

# Faith as Journey

*"To travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive."*

– Robert Louis Stevenson



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## 1<sup>st</sup> break:

How does thinking about spirituality as a process or orientation resonate with you?

How does Mel White define “fundamentalism”?

Spong talks about “killing certainties” that have crippled the church’s faithfulness to the Gospel. What examples can you think of?

What do you see as an advantage of being on a spiritual journey over arriving at “the truth”?

## 2<sup>nd</sup> break:

What is “Biblical literalism”?

How does “going literal” conflict with the spirit of Christ?

**3<sup>rd</sup> break Q's:**

What does Flunder mean by the “either/or” God?

How does her evolving spiritual journey compare with your own?

**4<sup>th</sup> break Q's:**

How might Jesus “introducing his disciples to deeper and deeper levels of ambiguity” help people live as Christians today?

How do you see “the process” being important in your spiritual journey?

If the goal is to go beyond the literalization of scripture, creed, dogma, doctrine, and words, how do you see the “journey into Mystery” changing the way we do Christianity?

**General Reflection:**

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

## Spirit Practice

### Stripped by God

What would happen if I pursued God -  
If I filled my pockets with openness,  
Grabbed a thermos half full of fortitude,  
And crawled into the cave of the  
Almighty

Nose first, eyes peeled,  
heart hesitantly following  
Until I was face to face  
With the raw, pulsing beat of Mystery?

What if I entered and it looked different  
Than anyone ever described?  
What if the cave was too large  
to be fully known,  
Far too extensive to be comprehended  
by one person or group,  
Too vast for one dogma or doctrine?

Would I shatter at such a thought?  
Perish from paradox or puzzle?

Shrink and shrivel before the power?  
Would God be diminished if I  
lived a question  
Rather than a statement?  
Would I lose my faith  
As I discovered the magnitude  
of Grace?

O, for the willingness to explore  
To leave my tiny vocabulary  
at the entrance  
And stand before you naked  
Stripped of pretenses and rigidity,  
Disrobed of self righteousness and  
tidy packages,  
Stripped of all that holds me at a  
distance from you  
And your world.

Strip me, O God,  
Then clothe me in curiosity and  
courage.

-- Cynthia Langston Kirk

To you, what is the scariest or unsettling aspect of exploring new terrains about God?

Think about the teachings/models of Jesus that are central to your faith. (i.e. relationship, compassion, prayer, social justice, knowledge of scripture, healing, forgiveness, etc.) Write a list of five teachings or examples that are important to you. Even though you may hold that each of them is important, weigh each against the other. Mark a line through them one by one until you end up with just one teaching or example that you believe is most crucial for you today. Do the same exercise in three months and see how the list is different.

## Try it

Share among your fellow participants the location(s) of any labyrinths in your area. Schedule a time to walk the labyrinth and discuss your experience. How does walking a labyrinth embody the notion of spiritual journey? Of pilgrimage?

## **Words of Wisdom**

There's a phrase in John 3 that is often translated as "born again" (*anōthen* in Greek) that is more accurately translated as born "from above." Basically, Nicodemus misunderstands Jesus and asks, "How can anyone be born after having grown old?" (it is translated correctly in the New Revised Standard Version)

Being "born again" has come to mean a once-and-for-all experience of God's grace and love. Insofar as it can be the first step in a life's journey of faith, being "born again" can be a helpful experience and concept. But Jesus never said you have to be born again, but born "from above." Being born "from above" implies a journey, a process, an orientation – a way of life.

**Read John 3**