

Faith as Journey

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

– Robert Louis Stevenson



1st 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”?

2nd break:

What is “Biblical literalism”?

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

3rd break Q's:

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

How does her evolving spiritual journey compare with your own?

4th 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