



TOUCHSTONES

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Journey

Wisdom Story



Introduction to the Theme

So here's the deal. You are born. You take your first breathe, gasping like a fish out of water, which, in a sense, you are. Everything sounds strange because now sounds travel through air instead of the amniotic fluid of the womb. They lay you down in your mother's arms, and you look up. The problem is that the lights are blinding, your eyes don't focus, and even if they did, your brain can't make sense of anything your eyes see. Welcome to the world. Your journey of life has begun.

If you could speak, which you can't, you would probably say, "Whoa, let's just slow everything down. Slow. Real slow." The only constant that you will experience is change. And you will ex-

perience so much before you even have language to begin to try to understand what is happening to you. The journey has begun, and you, my friend are a stranger in a strange world.

"We wake," writes Annie Dillard, "if we ever wake at all, to mystery, rumors of death, beauty, violence.... 'Seem like we're just set down here,' a woman said to me recently, 'and don't nobody know why.'" As the Buddha suggested, just being born is no guarantee of actually ever being awake. Welcome to the world and it's amazing and wonderful and terrifying creatures, including your parents, and the rest of the human species.

In the midst of all of this, what is the way forward, as the Quakers ask, knowing that discernment will be important on your life journey as you try to make sense of it all, as you turn over in your crib, as you learn to pull yourself up to stand a hundred times before your legs actually master standing, as you learn to crawl and then walk and then run, not sure at times whether you are running

(Continued on page 6)

A Long Journey

Janeen Grohsmeyer (adapted)

One morning, a boy named Ethelred Brown went to the Montego Bay Episcopal Church in Jamaica where he sang in the choir. Usually the people sang the creed, which described what they believed. But that morning, instead of singing, the priest said a line of it, and the people repeated. It included these words: "The Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped."

Ethelred thought, "What?" He was good at math. He knew that three wasn't the same as one. How could you have a unity in trinity or a trinity in unity? How could three things be one thing or one thing be three things? It just didn't make sense.

In that moment, Ethelred knew that he didn't believe the creed. That afternoon at his uncle's house, he found a booklet entitled *Unitarian Christianity* by Rev. William Ellery Channing. He borrowed the booklet. After reading it, Ethelred knew he was a Unitarian. But there were no Unitarian churches in Jamaica.

When he grew up, Ethelred worked as a civil servant in the Treasury. He married in 1898, and he and his wife, Ella, had four children. At the age of 32, he decided to become a Unitarian minister. This was the beginning of an amazing journey. Ethelred sent a letter addressed to "Any Unitarian Minister in New York City."



(Continued on page 2)

Journey & Deepening Connections

While we often think of a journey as being something long and, sometimes, arduous, the original meaning of the word was limited to a day's work or a day's travel. Perhaps in any journey, we should value time more, hold each day precious as the primary cycle in the larger cycles that we journey through: the four seasons as well as the seasons of our life and the cycle of years. There are different kinds of journeys. Some we take by ourselves as we seek to deepen our connection with our deepest self. A vision quest is such a journey. Other journeys, like a pilgrimage, also a deepening, are often in the company of others: companions, those with whom we literally share bread, a communion of people.

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Deepening Connections

I'm On My Way

(Continued from page 1) A Long Journey

Eventually, he got a letter back from the Rev. Frank Southworth, President of Meadville. Southworth invited him to study there. Ethelred asked people he knew to help him through contributions of money. Then he sailed to Baltimore.

When he arrived, he didn't have the correct papers. He went back to Jamaica to try again. A second attempt failed when his father refused to help pay for his ticket. Finally, in 1910 he enrolled at Meadville Lombard Theological School. He completed his studies in 1912 and was ordained. Ethelred was the first black person to become a Unitarian minister.

He returned to Jamaica and spent eight years trying to start a Unitarian Church, first in Montego Bay, and then in Kingston. Then he and his family moved to New York City, and he started the Harlem Unitarian Church in 1920. It had to be for blacks, because at that time, blacks and whites didn't attend the same churches.

It wasn't easy. They still didn't have much money, and they still didn't get much help. His wife became sick, and one of his children died. Besides being a minister, Ethelred worked long hours at an extra job that he didn't like.

For the next 35 years, Ethelred was the minister at the Harlem Unitarian Church.



Over the years, hundreds of people found their way there to pray and learn, to worship and sing.

In honor of his ministry, one of the songs in our hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*. It has a tune named Ethelred. It's the tune for #112 *I'm on My Way*.

It was a long journey, but Ethelred found a way to do what he believed in, and so should we.

Source: <http://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/children/journeys/session8/finding-your-way>

Begin A New Journey

Roads Go Ever Ever On

J.R.R. Tolkien

Roads go ever ever on,
Over rock and under tree,
By caves where never sun has shone,
By streams that never find the sea;
Over snow by winter sown,
And through the merry flowers of June,
Over grass and over stone,
And under mountains in the moon.

Roads go ever ever on,
Under cloud and under star.
Yet feet that wandering have gone
Turn at last to home afar.
Eyes that fire and sword have seen,
And horror in the halls of stone
Look at last on meadows green,
And trees and hills they long have known.

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with eager feet,
Until it joins some larger way,
Where many paths and errands meet.

The Road goes ever on and on
Down from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone,
And I must follow, if I can,
Pursuing it with weary feet,
Until it joins some larger way,
Where many paths and errands meet.
And whither then? I cannot say.

The Road goes ever on and on
Out from the door where it began.
Now far ahead the Road has gone.
Let others follow, if they can!
Let them a journey new begin.
But I at last with weary feet
Will turn towards the lighted inn,
My evening-rest and sleep to meet.

Source: *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien.



A Path is Only a Path

A Path with a Heart

Carlos Castaneda

Each path is only one of a million paths. Therefore, you must always keep in mind that a path is only a path; if you feel you should not follow it, you must not stay with it under any condition. To have such clarity you must lead a disciplined life. Only then will you know that any path is only a path and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you to do. But your decision to keep on the path or to leave it must be free of fear or ambition.

...This question is... Does this path have a heart? All paths are the same: they lead nowhere. They are paths going through the bush, or into the bush. In my own life, I could say I have traversed long paths, but I am not anywhere. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use. Both paths lead nowhere; but one has a heart, the other doesn't. One makes for a joyful journey; as long as you follow it, you are one with it. The other will make you curse your life. One makes you strong; the other weakens you.



...A path without a heart is never enjoyable. You have to work hard even to take it. On the other hand, a path with heart is easy; it does not make you work at liking it.

Source: *The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge* by Carlos Castaneda

Readings from the Common Bowl



Day 1: “And you? When will you begin that long journey into yourself?” Rumi

Day 2: “The beautiful journey of today can only begin when we learn to let go of yesterday.” Steve Maraboli

Day 3: “Sometimes the hardest part of the journey is believing you’re worthy of the trip.” Glenn Beck

Day 4: “In the middle of the journey of our life I found myself within a dark wood where the direct way was lost.” Dante

Day 5: “Your outer journey may contain a million steps; your inner journey only has one: the step you are taking right now.” Eckhart Tolle

Day 6: “Your soul knows the geography of your destiny. Your soul alone has the map of your future; therefore, you can trust this indirect, oblique side of yourself. If you do, it will take you where you need to go, but more important it will teach you a kindness of rhythm in your journey.” John O’Donohue

Day 7: “We don’t receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.” Marcel Proust

Day 8: “My favorite journey is looking out the window.” Edward Gorey

Day 9: “...there ain’t no journey what don’t change you some.” David Mitchell

Day 10: “May I share with you a formula that in my judgment will help you and help me to journey well through mortality... First, fill your mind with truth; second, fill your life with service; and third, fill your heart with love.” Thomas Monson

Day 11: “The best day of your life is the one on which you decide your life is your own. No apologies or excuses. No one to lean on, rely on, or blame. The gift is yours—it is an amazing journey—and you alone are responsible for the quality of it. This is the day your life really begins.” Bob Moawad

Day 12: “We’re not on our journey to save the world but to save ourselves. But in

doing that you save the world. The influence of a vital person vitalizes.” Joseph Campbell

Day 13: “It may be that when we no longer know which way to go that we have come to our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings.” Wendell Berry

Day 14: “The journey itself is my home.” Matsuo Bashō

Day 15: “All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware.” Martin Buber

Day 16: “A journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it.” John Steinbeck

Day 17: “Losing your way on a journey is unfortunate. But, losing your reason for the journey is a fate more cruel.” H.G. Wells

Day 18: “There is meaning in every journey that is unknown to the traveler.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Day 19: “And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our own feet, and learn to be at home.” Wendell Berry

Day 20: “Some beautiful paths can’t be discovered without getting lost.” Erol Ozan

Day 21: “A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, safeguards, policing, and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us.” John Steinbeck

Day 22: “Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a well-preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming, ‘Wow what a ride!’” Marjorie Pay Hinckley

Day 23: “The spiritual journey is individual, highly personal. It can’t be

organized or regulated. It isn’t true that everyone should follow one path. Listen to your own truth.” Ram Dass

Day 24: “My invitation, my challenge to you here, is to journey into a deeper intimacy with the world and your life without any promise of safety or guarantee of reward beyond the intrinsic value of full participation.” Oriah Mountain Dreamer

Day 25: “The Sun will rise and set regardless. What we choose to do with the light while it’s here is up to us. Journey wisely.” Alexandra Elle

Day 26: “My dad used to say that life’s a journey, but somebody screwed up and lost the map.” Rachel Caine

Day 27: “All great literature is one of two stories; a ...person goes on a journey or a stranger comes to town.” Leo Tolstoy

Day 28: “As you start traveling down that road of life, remember this: There are never enough comfort stops. The places

you’re going to are never on the map. And once you get that map out, you won’t be able to re-fold it no matter how smart you are. So, forget

the map, roll down the windows, and whenever you can, pull over and have a picnic with a pig.” Jim Henson

Day 29: “In every journey comes a moment... one like no other. And in that moment, you must decide between who you are... and who you want to be.” J.C. Marino

Day 30: “I guess that’s the thing about a hero’s journey. You might not start out a hero, and you might not even come back that way. But you change, which is the same as everything changing. The journey changes you, whether or not you know it, and whether or not you want it to.” Kami Garcia

Day 31: “The journey is part of the experience—an expression of the seriousness of one’s intent. One doesn’t take the A train to Mecca.” Anthony Bourdain





Faith and Theology

The Journey of Life

Rev. Anthony Makar

Life is a journey of continual learning and growth: it's a widely shared insight, across time and culture.

...I will explore ...who we are as a religious people, and exactly what it means for us. ...I'm going to draw on the story ...of ... *The Alchemist* [by Paolo Coelho].

..."A certain shopkeeper sent his son to learn about the secret of happiness from the wisest man in the world." ...The "secret of life" can mean answers, or it can mean the way to finding answers. Very different. Which one would you choose?

...Unitarian Universalism's focus is helping people find answers for themselves, for a lifetime. Teaching people ...how to tell the difference between truth and falsehood. Jesus once said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." That's the secret of happiness, from a Unitarian Universalist perspective. Being set free, by living into the truth.

...Truth allows life to flourish and brings people and planet together in harmony; whereas falsehood denigrates life, violates our relationships, destroys our world.

...We seek truth wherever truth is to be found. And this is ...within ...the Seven Principles.

...Ultimately, what we have ...is a truth test. We can know we are standing in the truth—we can know we are in possession of the secret of happiness—only to the degree ...that we are experiencing people's inherent worth and dignity; only to the degree we are experiencing acceptance of one another in our congregations; only to the degree that democracy is working; and on and on. Only to that degree....

The Seven Principles ...starts with the individual ("inherent worth and dignity") but moves steadily outward to embrace all of creation

4 ("interdependent web of all

existence"). It means you won't be in the truth if you ignore yourself and focus on everyone else; but you will be equally

lost if you make everything all about you. There has to be a balance.... Self AND other; self is never isolated from other.

...The individual has inherent worth and dignity; but a significant part of that inherent worth and dignity is an ability to take responsibility for the times when we fail to act justly, fairly, and compassionately. ...There has to be a balance.

...Conservatives think that because we have freedom of choice and open minds, we are a superficial and undisciplined people, we can just walk away whenever it gets difficult. They are completely wrong.

...For us ..., the challenge is trusting the journey of one's experience, conscience, reason, etc., even as you try to keep an open mind for future insights that may alter what you know; the challenge is dwelling in ambiguity without being overwhelmed or paralyzed by it; the challenge is maintaining deep commitments but never allowing yourself to get closed-minded. Unitarian Universalism is not for the faint-hearted!

...Paolo Coelho's story tells us that it

And then he hands the boy a teaspoon that holds two drops of oil, says, "As you wander around, carry this spoon with you without allowing the oil to spill." So what happens? Of course, the boy ends up observing nothing, because his only concern was not to spill the oil. He's afraid to make a mistake.

...In the journey of life, we know that things change, and what we might have fully embraced at one time later turns out to ring false for us. We also know that the journey is surprising and takes us down roads we never could have anticipated. We don't take the journey; the journey takes us.

And everything is grist for the mill. From everything, we can learn. ...The journey of life is messy, and there must be a willingness to tolerate confusion, a willingness to be imperfect and evolving. Unitarian Universalism is willing. Its spirituality of the journey is fall and then get back up again, and then fall again and then get back up again. Just keep on getting back up. Keep walking. Keep on keeping on. Your life has inherent worth and dignity. It does.

..."The secret of happiness," says the wise man in the story, "is to see all the marvels of the world, and never to forget the drops of oil on the spoon." See the whole, but don't lose touch with yourself

and your inherent worth and dignity.... Explore the castle, observe all the works of art on the ceilings and the walls. See the gardens, the mountains all around, the beauty of the flowers. But as you do this, be sure to stay centered in yourself and stay connected to the still, small voice inside. Remember that the most profound journey of all is the journey within.

...We are supported in this journey by the Seven Principles, which is our yardstick for measuring truth. We are encouraged to build our own theology and not simply copy someone else's work. We are going to make a lot of mistakes and at moments feel like we are wasting time but that is ok: the journey is safe, and from everything we can learn. The secret of happiness: right here.

Source: Excerpt, full text no longer online



took the shopkeeper's son forty days of wandering through the desert to find the castle where the wise man lived. He enters, he comes face-to-face with a "hive of activity," and the wise man is so much a part of it that he has no time for the young seeker just yet. "I don't have time for you just now," he says. "Why don't you wander around my castle while I finish up my business?"

...The wise man in the story gives the shopkeeper's son an assignment: "Wander around, get to know the castle."

Adventure Play: The Benefits of Risk Taking

Jenna Stadsvold

...Play has been called the work of children and is an important part of their development. It helps introduce kids to the world and to each other while also helping them build skills and confidence. ...Where does risky play or adventure play fit in?

The research is still developing, but it appears that risk taking and fear are an important and natural part of childhood play. Researchers have observed that all kids push their boundaries and take part in some level of risky play, such as climbing up high or going fast. It appears that kids have an understanding of their own boundaries, ...and will attempt risky play that just reaches those boundaries.

... Ellen Sandseter ...defined six categories of risky play: play at heights, play with high speed, play with dangerous tools, play near dangerous elements, rough-and-tumble play, and play where kids could become lost. These are areas that kids will explore through play as they build confidence and increase their skills. ...So, kids who experience risky play are better at perceiving risk and have higher competence at navigating these risks.

...Part of play and adventure for kids is trying new things and learning to test ...limits, and sometimes kids may go beyond their limits and fall. Turns out this is also a natural part of childhood that actually provides some benefits of its own.

...The goal in life is not to be fearless; fear is a natural part of life.... Through adventure play, kids can improve their skills for dealing with risky situations and reduce their likelihood of developing fears that could hold them back.

Source: <https://headrushtech.com/blog/adventure-play-benefits-risk-taking.html>

Kids Need Adventure

Stuart Wickes

The value of outdoor adventures, little or large cannot be underestimated. And it's not just about thrills and spills or

building a bank of rose-tinted memories of childhood. Whether building a tree house, camping and stargazing, fishing..., or exploring the local environment on foot or by bike; active adventures bring real health and developmental benefits. When children are helped and allowed to experience risk, even in a semi-controlled way, it helps develop their ability to deal with it and builds self-confidence. It encourages them to think for themselves and develops their resilience. It readies them for dealing with the risks and uncertainties that are part of the big wide world.

Source: <https://www.familyadventureproject.org/kids-need-adventure-parents-need-to-teach-them-how/>



Family Activity: Pilgrimage

Consider what trips you have taken in your life. Were some of them to special places and for which you have special memories? Sometimes going to a home of your childhood can be a pilgrimage. Share some of these experiences with your children. Then invite them to talk about special places that they would like to visit and why.

Family Activity: Sauntering

As a family, go on a leisurely walk in a place that is beautiful and interesting. Walk slowly and pay attention to what surrounds you. Prompt discussions with your children about what they see, what they like, and why.

Family Activity: Adventuring

As a family, brainstorm a list of ideas for adventures and write each one on a slip of paper. Put them in a small box or jar, and select one each week to do. If you need ideas, go to <https://redtri.com/outdoor-adventures-to-do-before-your-kids-turn-10/>.

Desert Spring

Rev. Victoria Safford

They had no idea where they were going, when they left that night, in the dark, without lights, without shoes, without bread, their children smothered against them so they would make no noise.

They had no idea what they were getting into, following this Moses, this wild-eyed one who claimed visions and made promises but who after all could guarantee them nothing, except death if they were caught.

They had no idea, these slaves, what it could mean, this promise of land ... and life abundant. Of freedom, they knew nothing, except what they could taste by living in its opposite, slavery, and that taste became a hunger, and that hunger became insatiable till they were ravenous for freedom, and they went out then—but no one knows ... whether they were led by Moses or by ...something eternal..., or whether their own human, hungry-will made them flee that night from Pharaoh.

They went into the wilderness. There they wandered forty years.... Forty was a good, old age, so many of them died before getting anywhere, and many were born in the desert and grew to adulthood knowing nothing but the journey—not slavery, not freedom, just the going. They whined and complained and muttered, and some mutinied, for they were a stiff-necked and rebellious people...; ungrateful people, even when manna rained down from heaven and quails were sent to feed them; unhappy people, longing, out loud even, for the familiar security of Egypt, of all places, where at least they knew what to expect, as awful as it was; impatient people, making cheap little idols and gods of metal to bargain with....

...The promised-land is not a destination—it is a way of going. The land beyond the Jordan... is planted in your mind and heart already, ...what you need to do is stand up and walk forward. Source: <https://www.uua.org/worship/words/meditation/desert-spring>

(Continued from page 1) **Introduction**
from things or toward things?

And, of course, to find your way, at least at first, you will have to learn how to rely on maps. In his poem, *Mapas* (or *Maps*), Mexican poet Alberto Blanco reminds us that “The map is not the territory” and “The territory is not the map.” He writes, “A map of the real world is no less imaginary / than a map of an imaginary world.” He writes, “Every map begins with a journey,” and then asks, “But does every journey begin with a map?” And as you journey further you will learn that the answer is no.

So we study maps, and perhaps this is what education largely is, but the map can never come close to actually describing the territory (or reality) itself. Maps can prepare us for taking a journey, but only in limited ways. We will constantly run into surprises and pitfalls that we didn’t expect. We may not encounter dragons in those places where the map clearly said, “there be dragons here,” and we may run into dragons in those areas where we thought we would have safe passage.

If we are wise, we will also become a map maker, which is to say that we will alter the maps we have as we go along, both our mental maps, as well as the map of cumulative experience informed by the actual territory and people and encounters that we have.

Even a poem can be a map, as we know from Robert Frost’s memorable poem, *The Road Not Taken*. He concluded his poem writing, “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I— / took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference.” Such wise words, if they were true, but our real life journeys are often so much more complex, with one fork in the road after another and another.

Once we begin the journey, the map

can be helpful, but how we traverse the territory will be unique to us. As Joseph Campbell said, “If you can see your path laid out in front of you step by step, you know it’s not your path. Your own path you make with every step you take. That’s why it’s your path.”



And all of this is just the outward journey. As Lillian Smith wrote, “No journey carries one far unless, as it extends into the world around us, it goes an equal distance into the world within.” The world within for each of us is a seeming infinity. Regardless of how far we have traversed, there are huge, undiscovered regions within awaiting us and awakening us. So, what is the way forward within?

The goal of this inward the journey is always to become more nearly our self.

It wasn’t until mid-life, May Sarton said, that she began the work of creating a self, after the death of her parents forced her to confront seriously the purpose of her own life here on earth, and that work continued for the rest of her life. She wrote of her quest for selfhood and authenticity in her journals and poetry. In one poem she wrote, “Now I become myself. It’s taken / Time, many years and places; / I have been dissolved and shaken, / Worn other people’s faces, / Run madly, as if Time were there, / Terribly old, crying a warning, / ‘Hurry, you will be dead before—’ / (What? Before you reach the morning? / Or the end of the poem is clear? / Or love safe in the walled city?)” In many ways, this inward journey is the most challenging as we take the next step and the next.

Finally, as playwright Edward Albee wrote, sometimes you have to go a long distance around in order to come back a short distance correctly.

Source: Touchstones

Pilgrimage

Ruthie Rosauer

Pilgrimage has a long and honorable pedigree. Geoffrey Chaucer wrote the seminal work about pilgrimage, *The Canterbury Tales*, between 1387 and 1400 CE. It is the story of a group of thirty people who travel as pilgrims from London to Canterbury Cathedral. ...

But Pilgrimages did not fade out long ago and far away. They are still a popular thing to do. [In 2019, over 336,000 people walked] ...the entire *Camino de Santiago*, which is about 500 miles long. This road spans northern Spain from the Pyrenees on the French border to Santiago de Compostela on the Atlantic Ocean. Pilgrims started using this route in approximately 900 BCE.

...A pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The pilgrimage, called a Hajj—is an obligation for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. [In 2019, almost 2.5 million people went to Mecca. The record was in 2012, when over 3 million went to Mecca that year.] ...



The purpose of hajj is to develop God consciousness and a sense of spiritual upliftment. It is also believed to be an opportunity to seek forgiveness of sins accumulated throughout life. The Prophet Muhammad had said that a person who performs Hajj properly “will return as a newly born baby [free of all sins].”

Buddhists make Pilgrimages. Pilgrimage is first mentioned in the *Pali Tipitaka* where the Buddha said that one should try to visit ...Lumbini (the place of Buddha’s birth). He said that if such a pilgrimage is undertaken with a “devout heart” it will be very beneficial to one’s spiritual growth.

Hindus are not required to make pilgrimages, but many do. [In 2019, over 240 million people visited the *Kumbha-mela* holy site in India over a period of 49 days.]

Source: <http://uuyosermons.blogspot.com/2010/03/spiritual-questing-pilgrim-tourist-or.html>

Sauntering

Henry David Thoreau wrote, "I have met but one or two persons in the course of my life who understood the art of walking, that is, of taking walks—who had a genius, so to speak, for sauntering, which word is beautifully derived from idle people who roved about the country, in the Middle Ages, and asked charity, under pretense of going a la *Saint Terre*, to the Holy Land, till the children exclaimed, 'There goes a *Saint-Terrer*,' a Saunterer, a Holy-Lander."

For Unitarian Universalist minister Tom Owen-Towle, "The saunterer is one who strolls in measured manner, with one eye on nature, the other on soul, treating the land, and all therein, as holy. The saunterer is on a sacred quest—not exercise but exploration, not recreation but re-creation. Sauntering is a mystical adventure. It is not the length but the depth of the walk that makes it blessed."

Sauntering is a way of walking that involves mindfulness, of attending to the walk itself, and the environment that surrounds us. We can walk in the city or the country, it does not matter. A walk around the block offers more than enough for our consideration and delight. We saunter by walking slowly enough to pay attention to details, by walking the same route again and again at different times of the day and evening to notice the changes in the details of the environment. To saunter is to walk slowly enough, leisurely enough, long enough to begin to notice details within ourselves and both the outer and inner changes of our own lives.

Sauntering is a form of meditation. We attend to the details before us or within us and contemplate them to gain deeper understanding or appreciation. In Zen Buddhism, sauntering would be called *kinhin*, walking meditation. The poet Gary Snyder suggests that, "Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul; primary to humankind. Walking is the exact balance of spirit and humility." For the Australian aborigines, sauntering is related to their famous walkabouts in the countryside where a tree, an outcropping of rock, or a

(Continued on page 8)

The Journey from Suffering to Wholeness

Mark Nepo

Whether conscious of it or not, we are all engaged in the search for the unknown other who might complete us and join us to the Whole. Our longing to join and come alive is our birthright.

My interest in this surfaced twenty years ago with a dream. I was walking across a very old and rickety bridge, ... and ...a young man, reverberating in his own inner turmoil, jumped into the fast-moving river below. I was panicked and



ran off the bridge and down the bank where ...an Asian sage, barefoot and bearded, was suddenly beside me. As they were dragging the young man's waterlogged and broken body to us, I looked to the sage, who appeared unalarmed. He registered the concern on my face, took me by the arm, and said, "It happens all the time."

I asked, "What was he after?"

"Oh," shrugged the sage, "he was searching for the fellow. He thought he saw it calling him in the water. It happens all the time."

I had no idea at the time, but this dream was a myth about enduring suffering and approaching wholeness ...a parable of my journey through cancer. When I jumped into the river of life so long ago, I was looking for the unknown other that would complete me. I thought I would find wholeness through love or passion for some kind of work or in the depth of my creativity. I had no idea that the thing that would complete me was being broken open by cancer.

Source: <https://onbeing.org/blog/the-bridge-of-well-being-the-journey-from-suffering-to-wholeness/>

The Journey of Figuring Things Out

Chris Lombard

The biggest fears are actually the biggest opportunities.

...In the quest for safety so much is lost. It is no fun falling down, but it is a disaster to be kept from the possibility. Life comes with death, and acceptance of this leads to happiness. Life actually comes with many deaths during it. Beginnings and endings. Much changes as you experience those lives and deaths.

...You can take that chance. You can take that leap. You might get hurt but if you know your heart and follow it, whether with a small step or a giant one, you cannot fail. ...The mistake is thinking that surviving the leap is everything. Because just by taking the leap do you get all you came for. What you pay in courage is paid back in love.

Giant leaps cannot be taken all the time. True love and courage can sometimes mean taking a step back. True daring can be choosing another path. One way feels right and the other does not.... Mistakes are really just results showing the truth of things. They show you where you are, and if you listen, they also show you what you need to do.

You are born into the journey of figuring things out as you go, until the day you die. Searching for your heart and tying your leaps of faith to it. With



that comes injury. Sometimes you see the injury, sometimes you just feel it. Cuts show trying. Scars show healing. Loss shows love.

Source: <https://www.awakin.org/read/view.php?tid=2437>

Small Group Discussion Guide

Theme for Discussion Journey

Preparation prior to Gathering: (Read this issue of the journal and *Living the Questions* in the next column.)

Business: Deal with any housekeeping items (e.g., scheduling the next gathering).

Opening Words: "I've come to believe that there exists in the universe something I call 'The Physics of The Quest' — a force of nature governed by laws as real as the laws of gravity or momentum. And the rule of Quest Physics maybe goes like this: 'If you are brave enough to leave behind everything familiar and comforting (which can be anything from your house to your bitter old resentments) and set out on a truth-seeking journey (either externally or internally), and if you are truly willing to regard everything that happens to you on that journey as a clue, and if you accept everyone you meet along the way as a teacher, and if you are prepared — most of all — to face (and forgive) some very difficult realities about yourself... then truth will not be withheld from you.'" *Elizabeth Gilbert*

Chalice Lighting (James Vila Blake) (adapted) (In unison) *Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law. This is our covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, to serve human need, and to help one another.*

Check-In: How is it with your spirit? What do you need to leave behind in order to be fully present here and now? (2-3 sentences)

Claim Time for Deeper Listening: This comes at the end of the gathering where you can be listened to uninterrupted for more time if needed. You are encouraged to claim time ranging between 3-5 minutes, and to honor the limit of the time that you claim.

Read the Wisdom Story: Take turns reading aloud parts of the wisdom story on page 1.

Readings from the Common Bowl: Group members read selections from *Readings from the Common Bowl* (page 3). Leave a few moments of silence after each to invite reflection on the meaning of the words.

Sitting In Silence: Sit in silence together, allowing the *Readings from the Common Bowl* to resonate. Cultivate a sense of calm

and attention to the readings and the discussion that follows (*Living the Questions*).

Reading: "And so, does the destination matter? Or is it the path we take? I declare that no accomplishment has substance nearly as great as the road used to achieve it. We are not creatures of destinations. It is the journey that shapes us. Our callused feet, our backs strong from carrying the weight of our travels, our eyes open with the fresh delight of experiences lived."

Brandon Sanderson

Living the Questions: Explore as many of these questions as time allows. Fully explore one question before moving on.

1. Whose journey most inspired you? Why?
2. Has your journey in life been what you have expected? If yes, how? If not, what unexpected twists, turns, delays, and detours have you experienced?
3. In traveling on your life path, what have you discovered about yourself?
4. As you look back on your life journey, what has surprised you most? Concerned you most? Delighted you most?
5. What was/is most difficult about the journey of life you are living?
6. Where did your spiritual journey begin and where has it taken you?
7. What remains on your bucket list in terms of your journey?

The facilitator or group members are invited to propose additional questions that they would like to explore.

Deeper Listening: If time was claimed by individuals, the group listens without interruption to each person who claimed time.

Checking-Out: One sentence about where you are now as a result of the time spent together exploring the theme.

Extinguishing Chalice

(Elizabeth Selle Jones) (In unison) *We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*

Closing Words

Rev. Philip R. Giles
(In unison) *May the quality of our lives be our benediction and a blessing to all we touch.*

To Live Deliberately

(Continued from page 7) **Sauntering**

lake might recall myths that are part of a reality that they call the "Dreaming." In *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard concludes that, "Some unwonted, taught pride diverts us



from our original intent, which is to explore the neighborhood, view the landscape, to discover at least where it is that we have been so startlingly set down, if we can't learn why."

Thoreau sagely asked, "Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises?" He also wrote, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately." Tom Owen-Towle observes that, "Thoreau employs 'deliberate' repeatedly to remind 'desperate' individuals that we are not helpless to alter the pace of our lives. Let each of us pay attention to the 'different drummer' in our hearts. ...Let us select a velocity of life that expands rather than shrinks our souls..." Sauntering is a good way to journey. Source: Touchstones

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