

Series 10, Class 1, Drinking from the Well: Lifework

Hi Everyone,

Thank you for joining me for *How Truth Pursues Me*. It was wonderful to be with our Spiritual Direction community again.

As I mentioned in the class, at this stage of inner work, it is very important to initiate a practice in your life that ultimately becomes woven into your lifestyle. It's often the case that introducing a spiritual practice can feel like introducing a physical exercise program until your awareness of "body-mind lifestyle" takes over. Then exercise is just an aspect of how you are now living along with mindful eating and other routines. You eventually "become" your habits and lifestyle. You should eventually *not be aware of your spiritual practice; it should just become one with your lifestyle*.

This non-awareness, so to speak, takes time but the blending in to all things becoming ordinary and routine does happen - even when directly embracing the power of Truth in your life. Truth is the engine of everything: You seek Truth in relationships, in business, in a health report from your physician, in the legal system. Ask yourself, "When has being lied to served you?" Truth is the greatest force in our nature because our nature is attuned or ONE with the balance of nature itself. We are inherently driven by the mechanics of the Tao. We seek balance in all things. We cannot sustain living in a constant state of anger or a constant state of sorrow or a constant state of "high". We will become self-destructive if we keep ourselves in any state of "extreme" for a prolonged period of time.

The ONLY way to maintain an extreme state of consciousness is to tell ourselves something that is NOT a Truth. Angry people never tell the truth; they constantly have to tell themselves a personal narrative of what they experienced or how they felt. Feelings are not Truth, though they are "personally" impactful. Why are they not Truth? Because Truth does not change or shift when circumstances do, but feelings shift all the time. Truth is a constant. The Law of Gravity does not change because you are happy or sad or angry. It remains functioning as it always does, regardless of how you feel. The Laws of Nature are as they are - impersonal, constant, and detached from any of our personal life events. That is the nature of Truth. We are subject to these laws on both the physical and mystical level. They govern our nature. Know your own nature and you will understand how the organic nature of the Divine functions within even your DNA. This is the knowledge we will continue to pursue in this course, deeper and deeper and deeper.

So then – homework (now called Lifework):

Lectio Divino or Sacred Reading: Find time for this practice each day. What qualifies for Sacred Reading? The Psalms, for example, though I can understand why many of you are not as enchanted by them as I am. I get that. But some of them are positively inspired. Psalm 23 - The Lord is my Shepherd. Psalm 66 - Make a joyful noise to God. Psalm 67 - May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us. Just read a few lines and let the meaning of the words sink into you.

John O'Donohue wrote a fabulous inspirational book entitled, *Anam Cara*. There are many inspirational books based on the teachings of Buddha and on the Tao. Just walk into a bookstore or browse Amazon and see what resonates with you. Build a library of these books. Poetry is also a wonderful way to transcend ordinary thought. Mary Oliver, a contemporary poet, is one suggestion and of course the great Emily Dickinson is a master of mystical poetry. Andrew Harvey has written a book of prayers entitled, *Light the Flame*, which is ideal for a daily reading.

The point of Sacred Reading is to feed your soul with a means through which it can speak to you - to provide your soul with an appropriate vocabulary of sacred language and metaphor through which it can utilize the passages in your imagination.

Next, expect inner movement. Expect new thoughts and emotional movement. Expect to think differently and to have feelings arise and fall. Expect new life to begin flowing through old caverns - and go with the flow of clearing out. This is when communicating with your spiritual companions is so valuable. Share what you are experiencing with your spiritual community. Truth is the most powerful of all change agents in life.

Finally - take time to pray. Take time to ask for grace. Take time to receive grace. Take time to be at your Well.

See you next Wednesday, everyone. I really wish I could "see" you, but I can with my heart.

Love,
Caroline

Series 10, Class 2, Drinking from the Well: Lifework

In this class, we explored the power of words, both the meaning and significance of using, **or not using**, these words.

Consider these words. They are the vocabulary of the soul:

- Sacred
- Holy
- Blessed
- Sacrilege/Blasphemy
- Evil
- Reflection and Contemplation
- Forgiveness and compassion
- Surrender
- Release
- Insignificant
- **(You add one here)**

These are words worth removing from your daily usage:

- Blame
- Deserve
- Hate
- Entitled
- Self-pity
- Resent
- **(You add one here)**

Practice this form of mystical mindfulness

- I am always on the receiving end of my words.
- Each word is a messenger of my soul.
- My words represent my soul, my character, my mind, my body.
- Every word has the power to change the direction of my life.
- Every word I say to another has the power to influence the whole of that person's life.

Spiritual Practice

- Introduce a new word into your vocabulary once a: day/week/month – your choice - but do it. Use the word in your thinking and in your speech.
- Remove one word that is a trouble-maker. You may no longer use that word, speak it. It takes time and discipline to release the power of a word but that is how you will recognize the power one word has in your body/mind/spirit/life/soul/creative force.
- Discuss with your soul companions or journal – just find a way to do this – a chapter of unfinished business that is essentially a negative exchange of

“words”. What negative words of your own have you contributed to the pain you are still experiencing? How many times have you shared “painful” words with others with a conscious desire to keep your pain alive? (Think about that – having a conscious desire to keep your pain inflamed.)

Series 10, Class 3, Drinking from the Well: Lifework

So far in this series we have gone from discussing Truth and what it is to the power of our words: what am I saying and why. In Class 3, we ask ourselves why we make the choices we do.

Your essential inner practice

Listen at your well before making decisions about anything: Ask yourself, “What choice will maintain the balance of my soul?”

Reflecting at the Well: consider a situation that troubles you

- What choices did I make that caused me to lose my balance?
- Where did I violate my own nature?
- What choice/choices are called for in this situation?
- What about others?
- Am I aware of how much the externals are influencing my inner direction?

Note: Inner direction or practice is not to be understood as “self-serving”; that is, always putting your self first. That is narcissism. Self-serving means decisions that keep you from compromising your spiritual values and integrity. Such values may put you in a position of risk rather than safety at times on behalf of others.

Begin the practice of:

- Detaching and refining your understanding of illusion in your life.
- “Not attaching to spectacles”
- Not blaming another or using the name of another person to explain why you do what you do.

Sometimes the best choice is to do nothing. When have you said or done something useless that created debris you eventually had to clean up?

Series 10, Class 4, Drinking from the Well: Lifework

Opening Prayer:

We meet together at the Well to bless each other and to open ourselves to the outpouring of grace. It doesn't matter that we cannot feel the lightness that is grace or that we cannot see grace penetrating into our body and our bones. The truth is that we would not be able to cope with seeing grace flood into us, as much as we would like to witness this Divine mystical gift. It's a paradox. We seek God and yet we cannot bear to encounter God. We ask for grace and yet we cannot seem to believe in its influence. We are creatures of doubt and addicted to safety and proof. And so heaven must act in paradoxical ways with us: It must disguise itself as ordinary life, hidden everywhere in plain sight. We seek everywhere for what is everywhere and we can never see it. We believe our treasures must be big to be real and loud to be heard. But we suffer the most from the absence or misuse of love – the treasure we cannot see or sell or buy and yet it is the most valuable. This is one of the most active paradoxes in the human experience.

Your essential inner practice

Listen at your well before making decisions about anything. Become the Silent Observer in your own world: This is the most significant part of your assignment.

Observe your own life, your own world from a distance. Initiate the stage of becoming mindful/heartful – conscious – of how, when, and in what way you influence everything when you decide to step into a “scene” in your life and add your life force to that scene to heighten its “illusionary animation”. Will you add your emotion and if so, what quality of emotion? Toxic? Loving? Calming? Or is it time to change the scales upon which you make your decisions from “choosing sides” to “which is the wisest choice?” – given that you are now understanding the power and role of polarities and illusions?

At your well, consider these thoughts and questions:

- What is small is really large; What is large is really small.
- Humbleness is power; Pride is your downfall.
- What is paradoxical in my own nature?
 - I act like an extrovert but I am far more an introvert.
 - I strike people as controlling when in fact as a person I am not that at all.
 - People assume I am not paying attention because I do not say much when in fact all I do is pay attention, precisely because I do not say much.
 - When and what is worth saying in a world governed by truth versus illusion? Dwell on that.

Closing prayer:

The deeper I go, the more overwhelmed I feel about what is real and what is not real, what is Truth and what is illusion. Why does life have to be so complicated? But maybe that's another paradox. Maybe life is not complicated at all. It is we who complicate this experience of life because we simply cannot accept that the gift of life is about sharing the gift of life. That's all. The more we seek ways to provide for others, the more we find ways to provide for ourselves as well. You've created a Universe governed by Divine laws that paradoxically guarantee Divine outcomes. To defeat evil, I must do even more good. To become clear about my own path, I must become a silent observer. I must stand detached at my Well and listen, listen, listen ... to the quietness of holy guidance. In the quietness is Your voice. Hover over me, God.

Series 10, Class 5, Drinking from the Well: Lifework**Opening Prayer:**

I come to my Well and listen...listen...listen. I breathe in the grace that comes from Holy Listening. I feel myself falling into the depths of my silent inner Well, always waiting for me, always quiet, always filled with a calming mist. The time has come, Lord, for me to acknowledge that I sense the presence of my soul – vague and delicate at times and other times, relentlessly in pursuit of my attention. What do you want of me? In truth, I want You to want me for something – for anything. I want You to let me know that I am useful and that You know I am here. But You are not my surrogate parent, filling in my emotional void. It is up to me to discover that I am useful. You have blessed me with restlessness, curiosity, discontent, and far too much anxiety at times. These threads go deep into my soul. They are Your handiwork. And so I will – I must use them – to motivate me to not rest, to question everything, and to understand discontentment as You knocking on my door yet again. Knowing even this much about how You come to me quiets my soul like a soothing balm. You are therapy for my soul, Lord. Hover over me, Lord, and all those I love, am striving to love, and all those I have yet to meet in this world. Amen.

Your essential inner practice

Be mindful of your spiritual needs:

- Spiritual companions.
- To detach, observe and have no expectations. Expectation is a way “to get your way”.
- Be aware that your soul will organically require more of your mental and emotional nature.
- Give your soul the “whole Earth view”, your north AND your south.
- Mindfulness of words: the discipline your soul requires for balance.

Sacred time

In silence at your inner well, consider the following in reflection and prayer:

- Lollygag: yes, play. Enjoy your life. Life is not meant to be only about serious stuff. Your soul craves joy, awe and just plain goofing off.
- Create: You are creative by definition. Explore that. Listen to your imagination.
- Roam your world. Even if it's just your own backyard. Discover something new again and again. Never repeat a day.
- Be available as a soul companion. As you gain wisdom, share it with a humble heart.
- Read sacred literature: Scripture, books on spiritual direction, my own book, *Defy Gravity*. These are some of my personal favorites:
 - *A Time to Keep Silence* by Patrick Leigh Fermor
 - *Engaging Benedict: What the Rule Can Teach Us Today* by Laura Swan
 - *Buddha* by Karen Armstrong
 - I also love the Psalms, the writings of Brother Lawrence, and The Teachings of Buddha.

Closing prayer:

The more I awaken to You, Lord, the more I must awaken to myself, to the way I live, to how I think, to how I engage with every living creature. Most of all, I must become aware of the power that I contain. I create rumbles in my world with every thought and feeling that I have. I affect the life of each person with just a glance, or a whisper, or a thought or a judgment. Maybe I was better off not realizing the power that I have, but I cannot turn back now. And I can no longer tell myself that I am helpless or powerless. I only have to shift a word, pray for grace, or stand in silence long enough to recognize what I am doing that is causing such disturbance in my life. No wonder a person surrenders their inner authority to You. Who can truly manage the power of their soul and not make foolish errors every day, or even every second?. I am realizing now that I am the cause of my own suffering because I want life to not act like life when it comes to me. I want the cycle of death and rebirth to only be the cycle of life. I want only pleasure without pain and suffering. I want love without abandonment. I still want the impossible and that is why I find myself so often in fear and sadness and grief. Grant me the courage to love life the way it is and to embrace the whole of life with all of its cycles, to live through the endings I encounter and embrace the new beginnings. I want to see life clearly and not fight the changes that are inevitable. Grant me the grace of trust, fortitude, and joy. I want to fall madly in love with this life that is mine to live; I want to live it fully and to die with an exhausted, loving heart. Hover over me, God. Guide me through my days and send your angels to watch over me through my nights. Amen.

Series 10, Class 6, Drinking from the Well: Lifework

Opening Prayer:

I come to my Well yet again. I embrace Holy listening, listening for the Holy to fill in all the empty spaces in me. May all that is Holy and Sacred be my ever-present companion, seen or unseen. It is time to re-enter the world through my heart, a heart that I have kept to myself; protected, wounded, shared with only a few trusted people. I leave that cocoon now. It is too small, too smothering. It is not as safe as I thought it was. It is a fearful space and it does not make me loving. My small space keeps me fearful. I think more of protecting myself. Even if I leave through the door of my heart through praying for others, I commit myself to becoming a witness to the journeys of people other than myself – to their pain, to their suffering, to the truth that their lives are woven into mine and mine into theirs. I and this world are one and the same living being, breathing the same air, destined to return to shed this body and return to spirit. Life is brief. Let me not forget what truly matters. Hover over me God. Walk with me. May all that is Holy and Sacred be my ever-present companion now until I leave this Earth and return to You. Amen.

Sacred time

In silence at your inner well, consider the following in reflection and prayer:

- What do you see happening in the world around you?
- How are you called to respond?

Your essential inner practice

As the previous classes have suggested, include some of these in your spiritual practice:

- Reflection
- Confession of some sort
- Prayer and contemplation
- Creative expression
- Detachment from inner weight
- Inspirational reading
- Acts of service
- Sharing with soul companions
- Indulge “good stuff”
- Celebrate being alive

Closing prayer:

Standing at my Well, I ask myself, “What have I learned so far on my journey?” I have learned that *the heaviest weight I carry is in my soul*. That one truth is proof enough of Your presence in my life. What other power but You refuses to be silenced? Were it not for conscience of my soul, I would have no inner disruptions, no inner voice that alerts me when I have made an unwise or harmful

choice, or when I have knowingly hurt another person. What my soul lets me know is that I knew I what I was doing and that I did not stop myself. Many times I do not want to know these things about but that does not stop my soul now from revealing them to me. I also know now that all of these rumblings, regardless of what I name them – my consciousness, conscience, psyche, spirit – all are expressions of You knocking at my soul. I cannot pretend I do not hear You knocking any more. I hear You. I feel You. I sense You. And now I also know what Your guiding presence feels like: You are my inner balance. When I am in balance, all is right with me because all is right with You. I recognize how we shall speak to each other – through the balance of my soul. When I am calm and at peace, that is also You telling me that all is well. You have finally called me by name and now I know Your voice. All this while I was waiting for You at my Well only to find You were waiting for me. Hover over me, Lord. I stand on Your sacred ground with head bowed and heart open. Hold me in Grace and all those I love and have yet to love. Make me someone who does no harm to all live. Amen.