



 The Evangelical Covenant Church

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

An Introduction to
Spiritual Companionship

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PARTICIPANT GUIDE

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JOURNEYING TOGETHER

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

This prayer retreat/experience is designed in ten parts, including the introduction. Depending upon the length and design of your particular retreat, you may not use all ten parts. Your facilitator will prayerfully decide which parts to use for your particular experience.

Through this experience you will be equipped to nurture community life through the art of spiritual conversation, so as to bless one another as spiritual companions on the journey.

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Spiritual companionship is an intentional relationship of trust between two persons for the purpose of sharing their spiritual journeys and encouraging one another on those journeys.”—Ron Ferguson, Covenant pastor

Why Are We Here?

Our Goal for This Experience

The primary goal of *Journeying Together* is to equip the saints to nurture community life through the art of spiritual conversation. It highlights the teaching, learning, and practicing of three essential companionship skills:

- Become a good listener,
- ask helpful, open-ended questions, and
- tell personal stories clearly and well,

...so as to bless each other as spiritual companions on this journey.

Guidelines

- Confidentiality
- Permission
- Flexibility
- Acceptance

Four Levels of Listening

- Level 1: Listening without an agenda (i.e., without a goal to fix, give advice)
- Level 2: Listening that non-verbally invites another to share
- Level 3: Listening that is open to the Spirit on behalf of another
- Level 4: Listening that opens space for another to explore more deeply his/her journey

How Does Scripture Inform What We're Doing?

1) *Imago Dei* (The Image of God):

2) Community in the Old Testament:

3) Community in the New Testament:

A Sampling of One-Another Texts from Scripture

I am a **companion** of all who fear [God].

Psalm 119:63 (NRSV)

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**

John 13:34-35

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

Romans 14:13

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:7

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 4:31–5:2

Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but **always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.**

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to **serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.**

1 Peter 4:9-10

For this is the message you heard from the beginning: **We should love one another.**

1 John 3:11

Note: More "One-Another Texts from Scripture" may be found in the Appendix.

A Blessing for Beginnings

Selected verses from, "For a New Beginning," by John O'Donohue (*To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*, Random House, 2008, p. 14)

In the out of the way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
this beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge....

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

“The Christian spiritual journey is a journey we take with others. Each of us must take our own journey, and for each of us that journey will be unique. But none of us is intended to make that journey alone.”—David Benner, *Sacred Companions*

PART TWO

THE 90-SECOND STORY

Instructions:

1. You have one minute to jot down some notes for yourself about a light-hearted story in your life. It can be about anything—a time you were embarrassed, a time you took a risk and it worked out...or it didn't work out! It can be about anything at all—but it must be about you.
2. After you've chosen your story, think about the six questions that are listed below. You will have 90 seconds to answer those questions and they will provide the content and the structure for what you share.

Six Questions to Shape Your Story:

WHEN did it happen?

WHERE did it happen?

WHO was involved?

WHAT happened?

WHAT ACTION did you take?

WHAT was the OUTCOME?

Reflections:

PART THREE

TELLING YOUR STORY & PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER

"We need companions on the Christian journey for a number of reasons. First among these is that the deep knowing of both self and God foundational to Christian spirituality demands deep knowing of and being known by others. Neither knowing God nor knowing self can progress very far apart from others who are able and willing to offer us help."—David Benner, *Sacred Companions*

An Invitation to a Deeper Listening Experience

Isaiah 55 (NASB)

"Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters;
And you who have no money come, buy and eat.
Come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without cost.

"Why do you spend money for what is not bread,
And your wages for what does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
And delight yourself in abundance.

"Incline your ear and come to me.
Listen, that you may live."

Practicing Level 1 Listening: A Story from Your Early Faith Journey

The Role of the Speaker

1. Share a personal story about your early journey of faith, using guidelines from the 90-Second Story. Your story:
 - must be true.
 - must be important to you.
 - must be tellable in 3 minutes.
2. You will have 3 minutes to share.
3. Tell your story without any interruptions from others in your group.
4. Take as many pauses as you need in order to tell your story, answering the six questions from the 90-Second Story exercise as clearly and simply as you can.
 - When did it happen?
 - Where did it happen?
 - Who was involved?
 - What happened?
 - What action did you take?
 - What was the outcome?
5. Do not expect conversation about this story—just tell it simply.

The Role of the Listener

1. Offer your full attention to the storyteller. Do this with your body-posture, your eye contact, an occasional nod of your head, a quiet um-hmm as appropriate.
2. Do not interrupt.
3. Do not ask questions.
4. Do not highjack another's story by restlessly wanting to share one of your own on the same topic.
5. Do not attempt to make conversation, especially if there are moments of silence.
6. Do everything in your power to be comfortable with any pauses.

After each story has been shared, 30 seconds of silent reflection will follow. As you reflect on what you've just heard, hold it in your mind's eye and see whether a word or image arises. Quietly, offer that word or image to God as an act of prayer for the storyteller as you sit in the silence with your friends.

Reflections:

Evening Benediction: A Unison Blessing

Adapted from *Each Day & Each Night: A Weekly Cycle of Prayers from Iona in the Celtic Tradition*, edited by J. Philip Newell (Copyright © 1994, WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow, G2 3DH, Scotland. wgrg@iona.org.uk; www.wgrg.co.uk Reproduced by permission.).

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are a bright flame before us.

You are a guiding star before us.

You are the light and love
we see in each other's eyes.

Keep us, O Jesus,
in a love that is tender.

Keep us, O Jesus,
in a love that is true.

Keep us, O Jesus,
in a love that is strong.
in a love that is willing to listen,
in a love that is willing to speak the truth.

We ask these things for
today,
tomorrow,
and always.

Amen.

See additional resources in Appendix:

- "That Delicate Balance, Parts 1 & 2," by Diana Trautwein
- Saturday Morning Message, by Grace Shim (video) – 2012 Covenant Annual Meeting, CovChurch.tv

PART FOUR

DWELLING IN THE WORD

Practicing Level 2 Listening: Reading from Scripture

1. Find a partner. Choose someone you don't know very well and sit together as you listen to two readings of a passage from John's Gospel.
2. As you listen, please consider one of these questions and be ready to respond to it when the Facilitator asks you to begin sharing:
 - What captures your imagination in this passage?
 - What do you hear God saying to you, as you listen to this passage?
 - What questions rise? What would you like to ask God about here?
 - What does this stir in you personally? How might these words impact your own life?
 - What seems most significant to you as you listen to these words?

3. You will each have three minutes to share with your partner about what touched you as you listened to John 5:1-15.

Perhaps hearing this story has stirred a memory, or a personal story; maybe it reminds you of an answered or an unanswered prayer; perhaps you have a deep desire for healing in some area of your own life right now. Whatever rises to the top of your heart during the silence, be prepared to share it clearly with your partner during the three minutes.

4. And here is why **your storytelling needs to be as clear as possible**: After you have both shared—each one having the experience of telling and listening (again, without interruption or comment, but with fixed attention and interest)—take a moment of quiet to reflect on what you’ve heard.
5. Then, find another pair somewhere in the room and form a circle of four.
6. Each person in the new circle needs to **summarize for the others what their original partner shared** from the Scripture reading. If you have listened well, you should be able to summarize your partner’s response in one minute or less. Your partner will indicate with his or her face and body language that, “Yes, you heard me well.”
7. All four of you will take your turn, and hopefully each of you will have the experience of knowing that you were fully heard and understood.

John 5:1-15 (NLT)

Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years.

When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”

“I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”

Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”

Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking!

But this miracle happened on the Sabbath, so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!”

But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

“Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded.

The man didn't know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd.

But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, "Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you." Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.

Reflections:

PART FIVE

USING CREATIVITY

Practicing Level 3 Listening: A Tool for Telling Your Story

1. You are invited to share more about your own personal faith journey by reflecting on one of the following. You will have about **3 minutes** of quiet space to see what rises in you in response to these prompts:
 - A defining moment in your life with Jesus
 - A current point of struggle/challenge/disappointment
 - A time in your life when you felt God showed up in a significant way
 - An ongoing concern or situation you would like to share in your group
2. Reflect on your chosen topic in a creative way for the next **30 minutes**. You can do this in any of the following ways:
 - Create a collage, using the art supplies on the tables
 - Write out a lifeline, marking where and how a significant event took place
 - Take a nature walk, if the weather allows, and collect items to help illustrate what you want to share
 - Draw a picture that relates to your story
 - Find a quiet corner, take a sheet of paper or your own journal and write something—a poem, a short paragraph, a collection of significant words or phrases describing your topic
 - If you have a digital camera and enjoy taking photos, wander the buildings and the grounds looking for pictures to help illustrate your story
 - Use any other creative experience you can think of!
3. Prayerfully consider how you will integrate your creative expression into your sharing time when you return to the gathering space at the agreed upon time.

4. Upon your return to the room, find two other people with whom to sit, to listen, and to speak. Then do the following:
 - Place your chairs in a small, tight circle and agree with one another about who will share first.
 - Each person will have about **5 minutes** to tell their story, using their personal creative expression to do so.
 - This time, those who listen may respond a little bit more by offering open-ended statements or questions—such as: “I notice that...” or “Am I hearing you say that...?”
 - There will be **no interruptions, no analysis**, only attentive posture, eye contact and brief, open questions.
5. When all have shared, please wait quietly for everyone to finish, and then re-group in a large circle to de-brief this process.

Reflections:

PART SIX

COMPANIONS ON THE WAY

Practicing Level 3 & Level 4 Listening

1. First, choose a walking partner.
2. Sit together in the gathering space as the Scripture passage (Luke 24:13-35, NLT) is read and discussed.
3. Think of a current on-going circumstance in your life where you need the Lord's wisdom to help you sort things out, or where you need discernment about future steps. Use the space below to jot notes, if you would like.
4. Carrying the Emmaus Road story in your mind and heart, begin a 30-minute walk with your partner—outside if the weather permits. Or, if the weather is uncooperative, do it inside—combining walking and sitting if there isn't much space.
5. Allow 15 minutes per person to share your story. As you tell and as you listen, ask these questions:
 - Where might Jesus be at work in the circumstances of my life right now?
 - What new invitation might Jesus have for me in the middle of it all?

"How goes your walk?"
—Traditional Covenant greeting

6. Listeners may ask simple, clarifying questions this time—remembering the kinds of questions Jesus asked along the road: *What are you talking about? What happened?*
7. Do not offer advice. Do not try to fix things!
8. If you have a simple insight, share it carefully—simply offer it up as a possibility.
9. Return for lunch.

**"I am a companion
of all who fear [God]."**
—Psalm 119:63, NRSV

Litany Prayer

Loving God, we gather in this space with our stomachs and our hearts full. We're grateful for this time, we're grateful for what we're learning, we're grateful for one another. Lord, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen, teach us to bless.

We have to admit that some of what we're learning feels a bit strange to us. We're uncertain at times, tentative and wanting to 'get it right.' Free us, O God, from that anxious place and help us to lean into you. Lord, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen, teach us to bless.

Will you bring to mind those things that **you** want us to know about you, God, as we work through and think about these parts of our stories? And will you give us ears to hear one another—to listen with our whole heart? Lord, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen, teach us to bless.

Guide us into truth, free us from ourselves, help us to trust one another, to trust you. Lord, hear our prayer.

Help us to listen, teach us to bless.

We'll give you the praise, for Jesus' sake, Amen.

Reflections:

PART SEVEN

LISTENING GROUPS

“Our individual stories are each a part of God’s larger story. By sharing your story well, you reveal God’s character and share his story with others. The process of discovering and defining your story allows you, as a follower, to become more aware of God’s faithful work in and through your life. This can lead you to be more grateful for the ways God has worked in your life, preparing you and allowing you the freedom to share your story and God’s story with others.”—*Your Story*
(Department of Christian Formation, ECC)

Practicing Level 3 & Level 4 Listening

We will begin with three minutes of silence in which you are invited to ask God to show you what to share. Perhaps something has been stirred in an earlier part of this prayer experience; perhaps you came today with something heavy on your heart or niggling at your mind. Maybe you want to explore something you’ve already shared, this time at a deeper level. As the period of silence comes to a close, whoever has volunteered to go first will begin to share.

1. We will allow 5 minutes for each person to share. If you don’t need the full 5 minutes, everyone can just sit and reflect in silence or listeners can share ‘noticings.’ i.e., “I noticed you leaned forward when you talked about _____” or “I saw tears gather at the edges of your eyes, could you tell us a little more about that?”
2. At the end of 5 minutes, we’ll have 1 minute of silent reflection across the room. During this time the listeners are to sit prayerfully and ask God to give them a word, a phrase or perhaps an image to share with the storyteller.
3. At the end of the 1-minute reflection time, each listener will share what they’ve heard or seen, without explanation or interpretation, offering their word, phrase or image as a gift to the one who has shared, trusting that God will work through their offering.

4. The storyteller will have an opportunity to respond briefly to what has been given to them.
5. All three members of the group will pray silently for the person who has just shared.
6. This cycle will repeat until each person has had the opportunity to tell their story.

Reflections:

PART EIGHT

BLESSINGS

"To take another into the care of your heart, you have the power to bless. To bless someone is to offer a beautiful gift."—John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*

Shaping a Blessing

1. What is a blessing?

A blessing is an invocation, an asking on behalf of another, for:

- Protection
- Light
- Peace
- Freedom
- Contentment
- Any of God's good gifts

2. Use the space provided to jot down ideas on behalf of the person you have chosen to bless today. There are sample blessings on the following page that may inspire you as you begin.

3. Now prayerfully meditate on how you can make this blessing personal and beautiful through the words you choose, through words you don't choose, by adding color, design, drawings, making a collage, or discovering natural artifacts. Feel free to wander the art supply table(s), take a trip outdoors (if the weather allows), or go wherever you wish to think about and execute this creation of yours.

4. Use the allotted time (about 45 minutes) to craft something that speaks of who you are and of what you want to ask God for on behalf of the person for whom the blessing is intended. Be sure to include both of your names somewhere on the finished gift.

Sample Blessings

The following blessings may give you some examples, as you create your own.

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.”

Numbers 6:24-26

“I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you.”

Ephesians 1:17-18

May all that is un-forgiven in you
Be released.

May your fears yield
Their deepest tranquilities.

May all that is un-lived in you
Blossom into a future
Graced with love.

(From “To Come Home to Yourself” by John O’Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us: A Book of Blessings*, Doubleday, 2008)

1. Circle [insert name], Lord.
Keep [comfort] near, and [discouragement] afar.
Keep [peace] within and [turmoil] out. Amen.
2. Circle [insert name], Lord.
Keep protection near and danger afar.
3. Circle [insert name], Lord.
Keep hope within, keep despair without.
The Eternal Father, Son and Holy Spirit shield [name] on every side. Amen.

From: *Celtic Daily Prayer*, by the Northumbria Community Ltd. (HarperOne, 2002) Caim prayers—or circling prayers--praying in opposites. “When you don’t know what to pray...”

Reflections:

PART NINE

SERVICE OF COMMUNION

Gathering at the Table of the Lord

In [Christian community] we engage in common activities of worship, study, prayer, celebration, and service with other disciples....Personalities united can contain more of God and sustain the force of his greater presence much better than scatted individuals. The fires of God kindles higher as the brands are heaped together and each is warmed by the other's flame. The members of the body must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other. Christian redemption is not devised to be a solitary thing, though each individual of course has a unique and direct relationship with God, and God alone is his or her Lord and Judge. But, the life is one that requires some regular and profound conjunction with others who share it. It is greatly diminished when that is lacking.—Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

PART TEN

EXCHANGE OF BLESSINGS

Teach Us to Speak, Teach Us to Listen

Adapted from "Caedmon: In Declaration of a Dream" in *Celtic Daily Prayer*, by the Northumbria Community Trust Ltd. (HarperCollins, 2002)

Teach me to hear that story through each person,
to cradle a sense of wonder in their life,
to honor the hard-earned wisdom of their sufferings,
to waken their joy that the King of all kings stoops down
to wash their feet,
and looking up in their face says,
"I know—I understand."

This world has become a world of broken dreams
where dreamers are hard to find and friends are few.

Lord, be the gatherer of our dreams.
You set the countless stars in place,
and found room for each of them to shine
You listen for us in Your heaven-bright hall.
Open our mouths to tell our tales of wonder.

[We] have a dream that all the world will meet You,
and know You, Jesus, in Your living power,
that someday soon all people everywhere will hear Your story,
and hear it in a way they understand.

I cannot speak unless You loose my tongue;
I only stammer, and I speak uncertainly;
but if you touch my mouth, my Lord,
then I will sing the story of Your wonders!

I cannot hear unless You loose my ears;
I turn away, and miss the quiet cues;
but if You touch my ears, my Lord,
then I will hear the wonders of Your word,
the wonders of Your word as
told through those I meet.

*So touch our tongues and touch our ears,
tune them to the Truth.
And as we share and as we hear,
may we not forget to tell
Your story—of love and grace and peace.*

APPENDIX ONE

Additional One-Another Texts from Scripture

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. **One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.**

Psalm 145:3-4

...

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, **you also should wash one another's feet.** I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

John 13:12-15

...

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. **By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."**

John 13:34-35

...

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. **Live in harmony with one another;** do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

Romans 12:9-18

...

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:8

...

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister.

Romans 14:13

...

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

Romans 15:7

...

Finally, brothers and sisters, rejoice! Strive for full restoration, **encourage one another, be of one mind, live in peace. And the God of love and peace will be with you.**

2 Corinthians 13:11

...

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, **serve one another humbly in love.** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: **"Love your neighbor as yourself."**

Galatians 5:13-14

...

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, **bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6

...

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. **Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 4:31-5:2

...

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by **being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Philippians 2:1-5a

...

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. **Bear with each other and forgive one another** if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you **teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.** And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:12-17

...

Therefore **encourage one another and build each other up**, just as in fact you are doing.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

...

And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but **always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.**

1 Thessalonians 5:14-15

...

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.

Hebrews 3:13

...

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. **And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together**, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23-25

...

Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 13:1

...

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other, **love one another deeply, from the heart.**

1 Peter 1:22

...

Finally, all of you, **be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.** Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

1 Peter 3:8-9a

...

Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to **serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.**

1 Peter 4:9-10

...

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, **we have fellowship with one another,** and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

...

For this is the message you heard from the beginning: **We should love one another.**

1 John 3:11

...

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to **lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.**

1 John 3:16

...

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to **love one another** as he commanded us.

1 John 3:23

...

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another.** No one has ever seen God; **but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.**

1 John 4:7-12

APPENDIX TWO

A Litany for Companions on the Way

Using words & images from Psalm 33, 119 & 145

Praise

Leader: Fellow travelers, I invite you to join with the psalmist in praising God.

People: Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and shield. Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name.

Leader: Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

People: We want to be true companions to one another, companions of all who fear you, who keep your precepts.

Petition

Leader: Help us, O LORD, to praise your work in us, to declare your mighty acts and to search for your glory in one another.

People: Guide us gently, O God, that we might offer a welcoming space to one another. Give us ears that hear, eyes that see, and minds that understand.

Leader: Teach us, Good Shepherd, that our job is not so much to fix and mend, but to sit with and tend.

People: To listen and learn, to seek always for You in the heart of another.

Leader: Help us, Holy Spirit, to lean into love, to honor the stories we hear, to see you at work, even in the broken places.

Dedication

People: We've come here to learn, we've come here to change, we've come here to grow together in love and grace.

ALL: Bless us as we seek to bless one another.

Leader: Holding these stones before us, we together proclaim our intent to repent! [*Lift your stone out in front of you.*] We humbly admit our propensity for distraction.

People: Forgive us, O LORD, and guide us into peaceful presence with one another.

Leader: As we drop them into the basket, we release the burdens that we carry. We offer them to you, for your tender and competent care. [*Pass the basket around the circle, each one dropping your stone onto the pile.*]

People: To you, O LORD, the only true God. It is YOU who can save us and not we ourselves. [Facilitator places the basket on front table, adjacent to the Christ-light.]

Leader: And all God's travelers said,

ALL: Amen!

APPENDIX THREE

That Delicate Balance, Part 1

(Both parts of this reflection were initially published at www.drgtjustwondering.blogspot.com June 5, 2012. Written by D.R.G. Trautwein. Used with permission.)

The wind was gentle out on the patio, where we waited for our lunch trays. So she set the small container of salsa verde on top of the napkin to keep it from blowing away. Lunch arrived, she picked up the napkin and the salsa went tumbling, as if in slow motion, spilling its brilliant green thickness over the concrete, splashing up into the pocket of my purse, dousing my cell phone with cilantro scented slime.

She couldn't see it. She can't see very much at all. And she didn't remember that she'd put it there. She doesn't remember very much, either.

I made three or four trips back inside to the napkin dispenser, sopping up the mess, silent, praying for grace. "Is this what life is now?" I prayed inside my tumbled spirit, as green and splattered as the sauce before me. Is this what it comes down to? Cleaning up one mess after another, praying for patience, grace, kindness. And all those good things feeling just out of reach, beyond my grasp, beyond me.

Because, of course, they are. My shadow self wrestles hard within me, struggling to teach me how to live more fully into these moments. And what I'm learning as I wrestle is this: the shadow is part of me, a friend, not an enemy. A place for learning and stretching, for telling the truth and not liking it very much. For acknowledging that this is hard. This is really hard. It's hard for her. It's hard for me. It is hard. And I am impatient. I do wish that she didn't have to go through this, and that I didn't have to go through it, either. I do not think completely selfless thoughts, you see. Sometimes, I wish it were over. Yes, I even wish that.

But here is the Truth that is slowly sinking in and healing the holes in me. Here is the wonder of redemption: God loves all of who I am, ugly thoughts, self-pity, impatience, frustration - all of it. God loves me before those parts are redeemed, while they are in process, and through the refining fire of life circumstances that are difficult, painful and not very pretty. That's a hard concept for me to grasp, one that I've pushed back against time and time again. Pushing back in my usual way - with lots of private name-calling, condemnation, guilt.

But today, as I look back at the last three days with my mom - three days filled with reminders of how much is lost, how frail she is, how brave and terrified she is—when I look back, I see mercy in the moments. I see glimpses of glory. I see fleeting images of the fullness, the richness of life - the wonder and the sweetness and the sorrow and the harshness.

It's all a part of the mix, you see, and somehow, we're asked to live in the balance, to stay in the center, to focus on the One who holds it all. The One who weeps with us when we weep, who laughs with us when we rejoice, who reminds us by the very life He lived among us that all of it is grace. All of it.

And so, the mess is cleared. The fish tacos are delicious. And my mom smiles at me across the table. She is beautiful. And so am I. By the grace of God, because of Jesus, by the winsome will of the Holy Spirit - so am I.

"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
(Romans 5:6 & 8, TNIV)

APPENDIX THREE

That Delicate Balance, Part 2

(Both parts of this reflection were initially published at www.drgtjustwondering.blogspot.com June 5, 2012. Written by D.R.G. Trautwein. Used with permission.)

She really wanted him to play the piano. Among the earliest guests to arrive at the party, she made her desires known right away. And of course, I am not surprised she felt that way. She's been teaching him piano for 14 years. He was 4 when he started, and we were gathered to celebrate both his 18th birthday and his graduation from high school. Fourteen years. How many people do you know who stick with anything for that long?

"He's been working on this one all year long," she said.

"I want to get him on tape," she said.

But he resisted for quite a while. As the sun began to set, about sixty friends and family trickled in the front door. The house looked lovely, the yard, enchanting. The chatter was friendly, filled with laughter and warm reminiscence. A slide show went round and round, repeating on the big-screen television set, featuring a lovely collection of photos from day one until yesterday. And it was there, catching glimpses of the past, that I felt the first sharpness, the sudden movement of grief and loss mixing its way right into the middle of celebration and joy.

Our grandboy as a newborn, held in the loving arms of his daddy. His daddy who died almost four years ago. So much sadness for so long. And so much joy and happiness, too. All of it mixed up together in this journey we call life.

Our daughter's new husband, strong and kind and good - such a gift to all of us, a gift we are grateful for, right down to our toes. But another milestone has come and gone, and Mark was not here to celebrate with us. That will never change. And I imagine, we will always feel that stab of recognition at such times, a moment of searing sorrow.

And it was only a moment. Soon, the joyful banter gained volume in corners, at tables, in the yard, in the house. And then, cutting through the conversation, I heard the strains of Chopin. Familiar music to my ears, music I heard in my own home, growing up: Ballade Number One, technically difficult, achingly beautiful.

So I gently led my mother into the living room, to listen as Luke played this glorious piece. She sat in a chair placed right in front of the piano. My father's piano, the one he played for years and years. And I stood behind her, my hand on her shoulder. And together, we heard a miracle.

The piano literally sang to us: of love and loss, of hope and discouragement, of hard work—hours and hours of hard work. My dad's, Luke's, our own. The tears rolled down my cheeks as I

missed my dad, as I missed Mark, as I celebrated Luke, as I thanked God for Karl, as I thanked God for all of it. All.Of.It.

Learning to play Chopin takes practice. And learning to hold the tensions, the mysteries of this life - to hold them together, to let them resonate with one another, to acknowledge the pain and loss, and to celebrate the gift and joy - sometimes in the very same instant - this takes practice, too.

Life is hard.

Life is glorious.

Life is overwhelmingly difficult.

Life is radiantly free.

Life is ... LIFE.

It's a dance with ever-changing tempo; it's a song with shifting harmonies; it's a tapestry, a rich oil painting, filled with color and with shadow. Thankfully, we don't have to navigate the dance floor on our own; we don't have to struggle to sing all the parts. We are given the gift of one another. And we are given the gift of Presence. Loving, gracious Presence. God - Father-Son-Spirit, Creator-Redeemer-Counselor: GOD ALMIGHTY invites us into the ongoing dance of the Trinity, the intricately, achingly beautiful song of the universe. In this life, we cannot yet see the edge of the dance floor, nor can we hear the resolution of all the chords. But... we can know the One who does. Thanks be to God.

"And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will. And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them." (Romans 8:27-28, NLT)

An Additional Suggestion:

Watch Grace Shim's Saturday morning message at the 2012 Covenant Annual Meeting at CovChurch.tv/am2012-gshim/

This may help you gain insight into the powerful importance of compassionate listening in the body of Christ.