

MEN'S SPIRITUAL LISTENING GROUP, ST. JOHN'S

Guiding principles, with stories as examples.

First principle: LISTEN

An interviewer asked Mother Teresa what she did when she prayed. She said, "I listen." The interviewer asked, "Then what does God do?" Mother Teresa replied, "He listens."

Second principle: EXPLORE

I once heard an Episcopal priest named Jim Clark say this:

"There are three primary and essential questions:

Who is God?

Who am I?

What am I doing here?

Third principle: TRUST

In his book "Letters To a Young Poet," Rainer Maria Rilke wrote these words, which have been quoted countless times:

"I beg you, have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves..... Don't search for answers Live the questions."

Fourth principle: WAIT

More than 50 years ago, I had the great privilege of spending time at the Tassajara Zen Center in the Big Sur area of California. While out for a walk one day, I saw something I will never forget. Two of the Buddhist monks were working on a rock garden, under the observation of Shunryu Suzuki, founder of the monastery, whose title was Roshi. One of the monks would bring a rock to Roshi, who would hold it, examine it and, literally, commune with it, then direct the monk where to place it. I'm sure it took a long time to finish the rock garden. And ... I'm guessing that we highly motivated Westerners might well have been concerned if we didn't finish the rock garden by 4 o'clock!

Fifth principle: LET GO

We're all familiar with the phrase "Be still, and know that I am

God" found in Psalm 46. Many Hebrew scholars, as well as several Bible versions, have another interpretation, which is that the words "Be still" have another translation, which is: "let go," or "become weak," or "stop striving." (I am indebted to my wife, Lutheran pastor Gayle Bintliff, for this information)

Sixth principle: EXPAND

An angel came to earth with two identical instruments that when employed would bring about world peace. He gave one to a woman and one to a man. The woman cherished hers and put it in a safe place until she knew the time was right to use it. The man took his apart to see what it was made of and how it was put together.

I will make and defend the argument that, in general, men love to analyze, solve, manage, and answer conclusively.

In this group, I will hope that we can drop that posture (for it often IS a posture) and embrace that part of us that is more pliable, more open to question, and -- dare I say it? -- more able to honor our feminine nature. Note where I got the information I presented in the fifth principle.

Those are the principles that I wish to honor and employ in this group. The specifics of time, place, format, and frequency will be determined at the first meeting, along with the creation of a covenant agreement among the group.

Jay Hornbacher, group facilitator
August, 2021