

Back To Basics 2024

Four Spiritual Rites of Thriving

Four-Week Sunday Series



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INTRODUCTION



Facilitators:

This book is a facilitators guide. It is designed for facilitators and you are at choice to encourage your group members to download it from milehichurch.org.

Group Times and Members:

Groups should be at least one hour but no more than an hour and a half. Ideally, each group should have no more than ten participants including the facilitators.

Opening and Closing Blessings:

A brief blessing should start and end each group session. The facilitator will do an opening blessing, and as trust grows in the group, it might be beneficial to invite a participant to say a closing blessing.

Key Points:

These key points sum up what we intend the participant to understand in each week's session. You can choose to share these points with the group or use them as your own guide for how to use the curriculum effectively.

Discussion Questions:

These questions are designed to create meaningful sharing in your group. You can choose which, if any, to ask.

Processes:

These meditations, worksheets, and experientials are designed to assist the participants inner exploration of the weekly topic. Choose the ones you feel will most resonate with your group.

For Next Week:

At the end of each session, an idea to contemplate or suggested practice leading into next week's theme is suggested.

Sharing Guidelines:

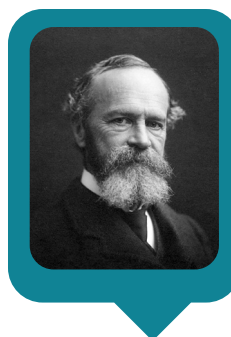
It is recommended you review these guidelines in your first session and refer back to them as needed.

Sacred Listening: When someone is sharing, I do not only listen but do so with the intention of not judging or trying to solve, with a loving heart.

Sharing From Personal Experience: When I share, I do so from my own personal experience, recognizing what may be true for me may not be true for others. I do not speak to others' experiences outside of how they resonate in my own.

Confidentiality: What someone shares in class, I will not share outside of class unless it is with the consent from the person who shared.

Authenticity: I will be sincere with my sharing by holding myself to the present and not the past; not to someone else's but my own vision of myself; not the roles I play but who I really am.



"It would probably astound each of us beyond measure to be let into his neighbors mind and to find how different the scenery was there from that of his own."

~ William James

BACK to BASICS 2024

“Work with your consciousness until it ceases to function on the level of problem and begins to function on the level of the answer.”

–Ernest Holmes

FOUR SPIRITUAL RITES OF THRIVING

Ponder this: I am a being forever in flux, held in a Changeless Reality.

Does that resonate with you?

We are never beings who are fixed and without change. We are always growing, deepening, or if we are not careful, stagnating and receding.

The spiritual life keeps us ever deepening in our experience of the Changeless Reality that we call God. The spiritual life keeps us ever growing, ever deepening, ever evolving.

And yet, just like in the process of aging, the spiritual life includes its own rites of passage—those rituals created for us by life itself that move us into our next level of becoming.

In this year’s Back to Basics, we are calling these the Rites of Thriving. These are all rites that symbolize our evolution to see that we are not just isolated experiencers in this thing called life. We are part of what Life is, inheritors of all its possibilities, co-creators in not only what it is but of what it can become.

As we enter this series that explores the basics of our teaching, we invite you to look at yourself and your life and ask:

What am I being called to graduate from and into this year?

What greater degree of good am I being initiated in?

What do I not see in my life or in the world, that I can feel as a potential in me that I can bring forth and become?

Week 1



From Broken To Whole: There Is Nothing Wrong With You

Although Religious Science celebrates the golden thread in all the common faith paths: Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and their many branches, there are some things that are unique about us and what we believe.

1. The world is fundamentally good and sacred. We do not come into this life and world but are a divine expression of life and the world.
2. Although brought up in a collective consciousness of separateness and violence, we are not born of sin or separation; we are born whole and complete.
3. We are here not only to learn but to thrive. Heaven is a consciousness, we as humanity are called not to hope for in the afterlife but to create in this life.

We explore what it's like to graduate from the school of hard knocks into a new level of being that embraces a thriving life, in a world made for good. There is nothing wrong with you!

Key Points of the Week:

- Religious Science is unique in its embracing of the fundamental good of the human spirit.
- You can live a thriving life by embracing your wholeness.
- Spiritual living reveals greater purpose for our lives.

Quotes for the Journey:

"Whatever you have forgotten, you can remember. Whatever you have buried you can unearth. If you are willing to look deep into your own nature, if you are willing to peel away the layers of not-self you have adopted in making your way through the tribulations of life, you will find that your true self is not as far removed as you think."

~ Meredith Jordan

"All goes to show that the soul in man is not an organ, but animates and exercises all the organs; is a not a function, like the power of memory, of calculation, of comparison, but uses these as hands and feet; is not a faculty, but a light, is not the intellect or the will, but the master of the intellect and the will; is the background of our being, in which lies an immensity not possessed and that cannot be possessed."

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Dearly beloved, we have gathered here today to get through this thing called life."

~ Prince



1. What is something you want to do more of this year and something you want to do less of?
2. What are your thoughts on the three points of uniqueness about Religious Science:
 - a. The world is fundamentally good and sacred. We do not come into this life and world but are a divine expression of life and the world.
 - b. Although brought up in a collective consciousness of separateness and violence, we are not born of sin or separation; we are born whole and complete.

c. We are here not only to learn but to thrive. Heaven is a consciousness, we as humanity are called not to hope for in the afterlife but to create in this life.

4. If you did not grow up with these beliefs, do you imagine that your life might have gone differently in some way? Do you embrace these ideas now, and if so, how does that cause you to live your life differently?



Optional Process:

Today we explore the rite of passage of moving from broken to whole. One playful but meaningful example is the idea of graduating from the School of Hard Knocks to Soul University.

School of Hard Knocks

Life is unfair.

Life has zero concern for me as an individual.

I can't get what I want.

I am broken. There is something wrong with me that will never be fixed.

There is not enough. Survival of the fittest.

Happiness, love, joy, and especially spirituality, are all coping mechanisms.

Life sucks, and we're all suckers.

Would you add anything to your list from your time in the School of Hard Knocks?

Soul University

Life is a blessing.

Life not only knows who I am, it seeks to remind me.

I can live in joy.

I am whole. I am a perfect child of God.

There is enough. I am here to thrive.

Spirituality is the key to living a whole and meaningful life.

Life is a miracle, and I am a part of it.

Would you add anything to the list you would want added to your curriculum in Soul University?

Now, prayerfully lead the group, asking for quiet, and giving two minutes to write down answers to the following questions, in the light of writing from the greatest sense of possibility, releasing any urge to self-limit what you might be imagining as too much or not what you are worth.

What am I being called to graduate from and into this year?

e.g., I am called to graduate from paying attention and complaining about what I don't want to focusing on working towards and receiving for myself what I do want.

What greater degree of good am I being initiated in?

e.g., I am being initiated into a more abundant life, one where I confidently know I have everything I need and more where that came from.

What do I not see in my life or in the world that I can feel as a potential in me, that I can bring forth and become?

e.g., I want to focus this year on letting people know I see them, approve of them, and support that their life makes a difference in the lives of others.

Weekly Affirmation:

I am a creative, thriving being in this thing called life.

For Next Week:

Pay attention to the following:

This week, did I experience life as more:

Happening to me?

Happening by me?

Happening for me?

Happening as me?

Week 2



From Without To Within: The Power Within You

There is no greater rite of passage in spiritual life than when you learn not to just seek a power from outside of you, but to nurture and accept that it is also within you.

This awareness helps us move from a place of victimhood and blame to one of co-creation and positive responsibility. It also assists us in understanding that life isn't something happening to us but something that we play a part in creating, for better or for ill.

The spiritual life never requires that we go without but that we learn to turn within. By doing so, blessings begin to reveal themselves all around us.

Key Points:

Although God has often been sought in the heavens, all mystical teachings point out that we first discover God within us.

The Four Stages of Consciousness can help us identify how we view ourselves in relationship with this thing called life.

There is a Power for good, in each of us, and we can use it.

Quotes for the Journey:

"The wick of your individual life runs deep into the soil of pure being. There is but one life and that life is your life now. No matter what confusion appears at the surface of your life, there is always a place of calm at the center of your being. No matter how turbulent the waves may be on the ocean of your experience, beneath there is a changeless peace, your being is submerged but not lost in the infinite."

~ Ernest Holmes

"The truth is always an abyss. One must—as in a swimming pool—dare to dive from the quivering springboard of trivial everyday experience and sink into the depths, in order to later rise again—laughing and fighting for breath—to the now doubly illuminated surface of things."

~ Franz Kafka

"If God created you after his own nature, and there is nothing else he could have made you out of, then the thing you are after is already here, within you."

~ Ernest Holmes

? Discussion Questions

1. What is a spiritual insight that has been growing you this week?
2. How do you interpret Jesus's mystical teaching: "*The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.*"



Optional Process:

Have the group look at the Four Stages of Consciousness.

From Barret Values Center



Create a discussion that could include questions like:

When is a recent time you found yourself in each stage of consciousness?

Examples:

To Me: I had to change my plans to take care of my daughter.

By Me: I decided to bring up something that was bothering me with my spouse, and she/he listened.

Through Me: Writing my intentions for 2024, life and I were powerfully working together towards my good.

As Me: When writing my talk, I could feel something smarter than me present.

Where do you think most people's consciousness is most of the time? What about the collective consciousness?

Affirmation:

The Spirit of Creation is within me, and I choose to live from it, now.

For Next Week:

Pay attention to the stories you tell yourself about life, yourself, and others. During the story, ask yourself, "Is this the whole truth?"

Week 3



From Old To Untold: Revealing Divine Truths

Ernest Holmes, founder of Religious Science, tells of a man who is incredibly thirsty, drinks a glass of water, and then carries on about how thirsty he was. The point being, too many of us have so learned to be thirsty, that we must learn to be fulfilled and satisfied.

An important rite of spiritual living is when we acknowledge disappointments and past hurts but no longer choose to have our identity defined by them. There is a greater story of our life yet to be told. We all have the potential to live thriving lives, but it's up to each of us to choose to realize that potential.

As we learn to live thriving lives, thriving takes care of itself.

Key Points:

No matter what the past difficulties may be, a thriving life in the present is possible.

Our life may not be guided by a divine fate, but we each do have a choice to accept or deny our divine potential.

Quotes for the Journey:

"You know always in your heart that you need God more than everything; but do you not know too that God needs you—in the fullness of his eternity needs you? The world is not divine sport, it is divine destiny. There is divine meaning in the life of the world, of man, of human persons, of you and of me."

~ Martin Buber

"Today is filled with blessings for myself and others. The past is gone, and I gladly loosen and let it go. The present is filled with peace and joy and the future with hope. Gratefully, I accept of the divine love and givingness and gladly extend them to everyone I meet. I am made whole with the wholeness of spirit. Gently, but with complete certainty, I am guided into right action and successful accomplishment of all good desires. This I accept. This I experience."

~ Ernest Holmes

"Someone should keep reminding Mr. Average Man that he was born free, divine, strong; uncrushable by fate, society, or hell itself; and that he is a child of God, equal heir to all the bounties of God; and that goodness is riches, kindness is power, and freedom is glory. Above all, every man is born with an inner capacity to take him as far as his imagination can dream or envision—providing he is free to dream and envision."

~ Frank Capra



Discussion Questions

1. Were you able to notice some of the stories you told yourself this week? What was your response when asking if those stories were “the whole truth?”
2. Is life all about free choice, guided by destiny, or a combination of both?



Optional Process:

A Divine Secret can be defined as a spiritual truth about you that you have yet to admit to yourself.

The reason it might be called a secret is because revealing it might bring a sense of embarrassment or unworthiness or a fear of dismissal or rejection. Or if you admitted it to yourself, you'd have to really live like it's true.

Take 5 minutes and write down what some of these Divine Secrets might be for you—divine truths you are being called to accept and embody in a new way.

You will not have to share your entire reading, but you will be asked to share the Divine Secrets you are ready to tell.

Examples:

I am worthy of intimacy and love.

I am an abundant being even when I am facing financial challenges.

I am joyful and choose to live in joy.

I am an exceptional leader.

I am a great speaker.

I am an incredible author.

I am my children's perfect father.

Create time for each member of your group to share all together or in groups of three that then come back and share in the large group, if appropriate.

Affirmation:

The Truth of my life is always there. I seek it. I embody it. I live it.

For Next Week:

Notice things you tell yourself that affirm your abundance and things you say that negate your abundance.

Week 4



From Living For, To Living From Abundance

Eric Butterworth said, *“Things may happen around you, and things may happen to you, but the only things that matter are the things that happen in you.”*

Life is abundant. Yet, our lives are only as abundant in our experience as our consciousness to receive. The key is not about how much we can take in; it's about our capacity to cultivate an awareness of the abundance of life within us and to live from and for it.

As we learn to live thriving lives, thriving takes care of itself.

Key Points:

A consciousness of abundance must be cultivated from within.

A consciousness of abundance creates and attracts prosperity.

Quotes for the Journey:

“Since you are fundamentally a mental being, you can think yourself into being unhappy and depressed, or you can think yourself into being glad. Did it ever occur to you that you can also think yourself into being well? Into being prosperous? That you can think yourself into success? Well, you can if you believe in the Law of Life and use it rightly. But you must learn to use it affirmatively. You must learn to identify yourself with your desires.”

~ Ernest Holmes

“In the quietness of this place, surrounded by the all-pervading Presence of God, my heart whispers: Keep fresh before me the moments of my High Resolve, that in fair weather or in foul, in good times or in tempests, in the days when the darkness and the foe are nameless or familiar, I may not forget that to which my life is committed.”

~ Howard Thurman

“It is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom, therefore, there can be no failure in the giving. We must know that. The kingdom is already given us. Abundance is already given us. And freedom is already given us.”

~ Ernest Holmes

? Discussion Questions

1. What are some things you tell yourself that affirm your abundance? What awesome are some things that don't?
2. What is a key insight you gathered in our time together these four sessions?



Optional Process:

Do It Yourself Prayer Request (HANDOUT)

Your Name: _____

Your Email or Phone Number: _____

Condition: What is the current state of affairs?

Desired Outcome: What is the highest and best you can envision taking place?

What Qualities of Spirit Would You Most Like to Be Embodied:

e.g., Faith, Love, Peace of Mind, Healing, Wholeness

Would you like to receive?

- ☐ A written prayer via email
- ☐ A phone call from the Prayer and Care Center
- ☐ An affirmation via email

Discuss What it was like to go through each step.

Was it helpful to clearly write out the condition? Does this help us become willing to let it go?

Was it helpful to write the desired outcome? Do you resonate with the idea that “You can’t get what you want until you know what it is?”

Was it supportive to identify qualities of Spirit? Are these things we can embody now even if the full demonstration of our prayer has yet to take place?

Practitioner: Gather up the prayer requests and do a group prayer affirming the qualities of spirit for each group member.

Affirmation:

In all things, in all experiences, in all moments, I choose to live abundantly.

Back To Basics Small Groups Feedback Form

Feel free to share your name if you so choose

1. What did you appreciate/not appreciate about:

a. The material

b. The group dynamic

c. The learning environment

d. What would you suggest improvement upon?

e. Anything else you would like us to know?