

ADVENTURE
IN FAITH 23
WEEK FOUR

THE MUSTARD SEED

SPIRITUALITY
FROM THE
GROUND UP

Jesus used the mustard seed as a symbol of faith. The Buddha used it as a symbol of acceptance.

One of the great things about exploring other faiths isn't just in how they see things the same, but the same things, from different perspectives.

You can practice the faith of Christ, the discernment of the Buddha, the wisdom of your ancestors, and the wonder of your children.

Your faith isn't a combination of many, it is one faith, uplifted by the wisdom of so many.

KEY POINTS:

- Faith is about possibilities, but it can also be about acceptance.
- Even the smallest amount of faith, can demonstrate powerfully in our lives.
- Living from faith is a powerful creative action and sets in motion the creative process.

QUOTES FOR THE JOURNEY

*Don't wait for someone to bring you flowers.
Plant your own garden and decorate your own soul.*

~ Luther Burbank

To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow.

~ Audrey Hepburn

*What was once a tiny seed of belief for me has grown into the
Tree of life, so if your faith is a little tested in this or any season,
I invite you to lean on mine... Hope on. Journey on.
Honestly acknowledge your questions and your concerns,
but first and forever fan the flame of your faith,
because all things are possible to them that believe.*

~ Jeffrey R. Holland

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. Have you ever practiced a Sabbath day or Sabbath hours? What was the experience like for you this past week?
2. The mustard seed, as well as being a cooking ingredient, has multiple spiritual meanings: Faith, growth, luck, support, healing, protection, purity, and prosperity. What does the mustard seed symbolize to you?

Read the parable of the sower:

“Then he told them many things in parables, saying: A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.”

3. Where does the hardpacked soil of the pathway show up in your thoughts and beliefs? What about the rocky places with little soil? What are the weeds that choke out and overwhelm what you sow? Where is the good soil in your life? What seeds have you planted that are flourishing?



OPTIONAL PROCESSES

Process One

Read the following parables about the mustard seed.

Buddhist:

A woman had a son, who became ill and died. The woman was so distraught she carried the baby around, refusing to accept what had happened. People in her village urged her to give the child a decent burial. But she refused.

Finally, someone suggested she go see the Buddha. He could perform miracles and could perhaps bring him back to life.

The woman traveled a long way to seek an audience with the great teacher. She told him her story.

“Can you bring my son back to me?” She asked.

The Buddha nodded. There was a process for this, he told her.

“You must take a mustard seed and give it to any family you find that hasn’t lost someone.”

The woman was elated.

She took the mustard seed to the first house she could find. She asked the man at the door if anyone there had died.

“Yes, my wife died, leaving me to care for our children,” he answered.

The woman moved on to another house, where a child had died. She went from one house to another, but each one had a loss—a mother, father, aunt, uncle.

The woman went back home and buried her son. After that, she became a follower of the Buddha.

Christianity:

“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches.”

What if anything do these two parables have in common or in difference with one another? Which resonates more with you? What do they tell us about faith?

Process Two: Meditation

This is unusual in meditation, but I invite you to become mindful of any doubts you have about yourself.

Doubts about achieving what you want to accomplish.

Doubts about your abilities to achieve your goals or be the kind of person you want to be.

Doubts about your worthiness to be loved and prized.

Know that this is a safe place to listen to those doubts. To hear them.

What I want you to do, is to not just hear what they say, but listen to what they sound like.

What does the voice sound like that speaks these doubts?

Is it your own voice? If so, is it your voice present or past?

Perhaps it is someone else's voice?

Now, I invite you to listen to the voice of encouragement in yourself?

Encouragement to have faith that the seeds you have planted in your life will grow.

Encouragement that you are a good and capable person.

Encouragement that you are love-worthy and a significant person in other's lives.

What does this voice sound like?

Is it your own voice? Is it the voice of spirit guides, known or unknown to you?

Now, listen to the part of you, and it is there, that with absolute confidence, knows the truth of who you are, the truth of why you are here, and who you are in the Great Spirit.

This part of you knows you can accomplish anything while also knowing you don't have to accomplish a thing to be whole.

This part of you knows how love-worthy and giving you are and how precious you are.

This part of you knows the power of your presence, your word, and your truth.

How big is this part of you?

Is it a beach ball, or a baseball? An oak tree, or a mustard seed.

No matter what, imagine for a moment, that the rest of this day, you lived from this inner knowing. You spoke from it. You chose from it. You ate from it. You listened from it.

How would you live differently?

Even if the size of a mustard seed, if you lived from this faith, it would grow like wildfire in your life.

Just one day, and your entire life could change for the better, forever.

To close with a thought from Thomas Merton:
"Every moment and every event of every man's life on earth plants something in his soul. For just as the wind carries thousands of winged seeds, so each moment brings with it germs of spiritual vitality that come to rest imperceptibly in the minds and wills of men. Most of the unnumbered seeds perish and are lost, because men are not prepared to receive them: for such seeds as these cannot spring up anywhere except in the good soil of freedom, spontaneity, and love."





INTERFAITH PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

(Handout)

From the Buddhist Tradition: Thich Nhat Hanh's Walking Meditation

Walking on the Earth

Walk slowly, in a relaxed way. When you practice this way, your steps are those of the most secure person on earth. Feel the gravity that makes every step attach to the earth. With each step, you are grounded on the earth.

One way to practice walking meditation is to breathe in and take one step, and focus all your attention on the sole of your foot. If you have not arrived fully, 100 percent in the here and the now, don't take the next step. I'm sure you can take a step like that because there is buddhanature in you. Buddhanature is the capacity of being aware of what is going on. It is what allows you to recognize what you are doing in the current moment and to say to yourself, I am alive, I am taking a step. Anyone can do this. There is a buddha in every one of us, and we should allow the buddha to walk.

While walking, practice conscious breathing by counting steps. Notice each breath and the number of steps you take as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Don't try to control your breathing. Allow your lungs as much time and air as they need, and simply notice how many steps you take as your lungs fill up and how many you take as they empty, mindful of both your breath and your steps. The link is the counting.

When you walk uphill or downhill, the number of steps per breath will change. Always follow

the needs of your lungs. You may notice that your exhalation is longer than your inhalation. You might find that you take three steps during your in-breath and four steps during your out-breath, or two steps, then three steps. If this is comfortable for you, please enjoy practicing this way. You can also try making the in-breath and the out-breath the same length, so that you take three steps with your in-breath and three with your out-breath. Keep walking and you will find the natural connection between your breath and your steps.

Don't forget to practice smiling. Your half-smile will bring calm and delight to your steps and your breath, and help sustain your attention. After practicing for half an hour or an hour, you will find that your breath, your steps, your counting, and your half-smile all blend together in a marvelous balance of mindfulness. Each step grounds us in the solidity of the earth. With each step we fully arrive in the present moment.

Walking Meditation Poem

*I take refuge in Mother Earth.
Every breath, every step manifests our love.
Every breath brings happiness.
Every step brings happiness.
I see the whole cosmos in the earth.*



AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER

All I need is the tiniest amount of faith, to live from, to believe from, to choose from, to think from, to listen from. As I live from this faith; faith in myself, faith in my purpose, faith in what I am called to become, I know living from this faith creates such wellbeing and thriving. Not just for me, but for all whom I love around me. I am so very grateful. And so it is. Amen.

AFFIRMATION

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