

Appendix D: Questions and Answers from Spiritual Practice Groups

The transcriptions of these answers indicate some unified group responses and some individual responses, evident when a variety of perspectives are mentioned. Thus we can see diversity even within these groups who had met around shared practices.

The questions to each group were:

1. **What do you do in your spiritual practice group?**
2. **What are you looking for in following this practice?**
3. **How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?**
4. **How does this practice fuel your Grail work?**

WALKING THE LAND

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

Walk the land.

What are you looking for in following this practice?

Being in the present/now

Mind/body/spirit union

Listening to sounds of nature

How to preserve the land

To connect with the creative energy that infuses all of nature

God is the creative energy within the universe and earth, people, animals, plants, all things, and ourselves

The world is charged with the grandeur of God

In itself glorious

Beauty of nature – result of 18.7 (?) billion years of development

Reality check – awe, majesty, mystery – infusion of God with nature and feel in self

Sunrise/sunset

Kinesthetic in orientation – “energized” – gets me in touch with self through physical

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

It grounds us literally and figuratively.

Exercise – state of body impacts spirit – we are one!

Restorative

Results in an inner calm

Connects us with natural cycles of the earth – healthful – gives sense of awe and sense of mystery

One body – temple – you take care of me and I you

Want to have respect and reverence all life

Cleansing air

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

Work with the environmental committee

We live more lightly on the land – conserving, recycling, buying natural products

Support of Grailville to maintain the land and acreage

JOURNALING

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

Different methods for different people, so in this group we start with a phrase, a poem, a picture, a happening as a prompt, for example, "I remember..." "Is my soul asleep?" Then we write. Afterwards we share what we want to and listen to each other. If we choose to read or not read our writings to one another our shared vulnerability is one way we bond at a deep level.

What are you looking for in following this practice?

Approach with a feeling of expectation; begin a process of clarification; enhance spirituality – write of graced moments to see my relationship with God; a deepening of spirit; strengthening of skill; reflection; comfort; insight; clarity; to discover something from my sub-conscious that just pops up.

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

Way of living intentionally; make lists; work my way through problems; focus my day; centering; get to the heart of the matter

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

Feel recharged/renewed; people are willing to be vulnerable so we meet on a very deep level; appreciate people on a very different level; bonding; we laughed hard because we identified with one another – we ended with 15 minutes of real belly laughter; helps accept diversities; we create a safe space

PSALMS, SCRIPTURES

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

We all read and reflect on scripture. Use a daily lectionary (readings chosen for Mass) and commentaries to contextualize the readings of the day. Scripture feeds our meditation. We felt energy with group silent prayer.

What are you looking for in following this practice?

Keeping faithful to the practice is helped by being in a group. We are energized by remembering. We are looking to sustain and deepen relationship with God. Using scripture to get some direction for life. We relish being part of the stream that keeps flowing. Be part of the community of God.

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

It helps us keep faithful. It connects us to the Paschal mystery, our roots. This desire is a God-centered life. Our hope is this practice sustains it.

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

This practice enables us to widen our social awareness and involvement. The practice fuels our work. Keeps us from being part of the problem.

ZEN MEDITATION

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

Zen sitting and walking

What are you looking for in following this practice?

Prayer space. Letting go. To be present. A tradition and discipline with a proven path. To be awake to the NOW. Sharing with others who do this practice.

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

Helps with presence to the happenings in my life. Present to others and to the situation – helps to take part in that. Antidote to individualism. Helps to quiet oneself – to be in touch with what will always be. Totally at rest in the Divine. If I can be quiet and present then something can work through me. I need it to be able to do my work. A help to integrate the contemplative aspects of the Gospels. Helps with a non-judgmental attitude.

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

Not in any particular way. One person learned Zen meditation at the Tilt and another from a U.S. Grail member. Others unconnected with Grail. A way of using my spiritual energy. It clears me for that to get to a deeper core. Puts things in perspective. Helps to deal with the “oughts” in my head. Transform the world in any way I can – i.e., change someone’s way of looking at things, or helping them to be able to do a task even as simple as having to wash a floor. Grail value of spirituality is tapped into through meditation.

GROUP MEDITATION

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

Meditate each in our own separate ways in the same room quietly. As each of us finishes in her own time, we gather around art materials and make some visual expression.

What are you looking for in following this practice?

Connection to inner self/to the divine. Even though this is done separately, we draw on the collective energy of being centered in the same space. We find it surprisingly meaningful to do this together.

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

Opens me up to the divine flow... in being in balance and centered. I am better able to be my best self and live the life I’m called to live. Meditation opens me up to awareness in my regular life of ways that God speaks to me and guides me.

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

The Grail is my life... spiritual practice fuels my life and in that way fuels the Grail.

POWER OF NOW – ECKHART TOLLE

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

Overview – following seminars
Finding stillness and presence. Chanting, breathing, meditation
Letting go of ego – techniques thereof

What are you looking for in following this practice?

interfacing inner center with something larger
direction and meaning to my life. Implementation
maintaining state of Grace. Living in state of Grace
be in mystery of all that is
place to share spirituality

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

makes me open to intuition and inspiration. From collective (group) mind.
distancing from “little me” and opening to “big me.”
makes me feel life is uncluttered. Living in big open space
transforming negativity through acceptance
transforming ourselves we transform world

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

gives me patience and capacity to manage details in state of peace
enables me to see where Spirit is leading us in realistic optimism
fuels me to develop programs at Grail
tempers me to develop spiritual focus
enhance all work with Grail

“NO PARTICULAR PRACTICE” GROUP

This was for people who found connection with the Divine/Beyond/Whatever in various ways and at various moments, but did not have a regularly pursued practice that they could identify. Some people are artists, who experience such moments occasionally, etc., but are mainly doing their art. Some meditate almost every day, and/or journal almost every day, but feel that both of those are more like ways of talking to oneself than Spiritual Practices. Once in a while some Grace flashes in, but they don't count on that....

What do (did) you do in your spiritual practice group?

Shared ourselves and our spiritual life in the Grail. Each attempted to describe our unique paths. Because two are involved in Metanoia process, much was conveyed about why openness and honesty are so key. We came without any unifying practice, and honored each one's search. We, too, felt part of a community.

What are you looking for in following this practice?

A safe place to search. Without a dominant spiritual practice, desired not to feel alone. Finding others assures one that the Grail is a safe place to search. By being in this group, we're acknowledging the many faces of God.

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

Knowing the Grail is a safe place to share search is vital. I don't have to articulate with clarity to push my own searching out. Our longing is recognized. Many times in our lives we find it difficult to articulate with clarity our spiritual practice. We were able to do this together.

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

No distinction between Grail work and life work. Being supported in my spiritual groping helps me to support others' groping. We felt comfort in experiencing not being alone without a particular practice.

Some moments spirituality is more likely to happen. Two shared spiritual moments in peace marches. Another shared the Grail in Brazil's experience of collaborating and when the group longed for a spiritual closing, the Grail was asked to lead it.

Each step on this spiritual search enables the next. Because of experience with this group, some of us opened to wanting to join the Metanoia group at Cornwall.

Don't separate the sacred from daily life. Every act can be a spiritual practice (cooking, bookkeeping, all work). Every moment can be sacred.

CENTERING PRAYER

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

Prayer of intention
Sit in comfort
Allow body to relax and become very quiet
Consent to presence and action of God within

Choose a word to return to – Sacred Word

Do not change word in centering

Gently say sacred word – if distracted – return to sacred word – if a thought occurs, let go of it by remembering your intention to consent to the presence and action of God within and return to sacred word

Origins – “Cloud of Unknowing” – Benedictine roots

Not attempt to communicate with God – but opening yourself to the presence of God

What are you looking for in following this practice?

To feel at peace

To believe in spite of daily distractions

Connection to the world, self, others – to be in the presence of God patiently

Connection without results

Looking to have right kind of energy

Need sense of the comfort of a Word

To be open and available for the divine – quietness

Opening myself to the wonder and awe in the universe and a way of not being in control

Word in context of daily activities – brings me back to peace

If done consistently, I find that I am ok with whatever is happening around me

Looking for silence and a way beyond words

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

To be capable of respecting your fellow humans and all life

“Passive” meditation (to quiet the body) may be means of being more attentive

To live with acceptance, patience respect for all creation

To use the right kind of energy in the world that is in touch with the power of love

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

Being “more together” – realization of “real me”

Intensity – Fears – Negative energy works against our group efforts and centering helps to change those impulses

I’m more together definitely – I’m more myself, centered

Get a sense of how to deal with my intensity and passion so that I can be more accessible and work better with others

Gets rid of a lot of conceptual frameworks and helps me to be more flexible and open to other ways

Helps me to be present to the now

Counterforce to anxiety and perfectionism

I am not my feelings and thoughts. I am a being who has thoughts

Opens us to new way of relating that is beyond thoughts and identity

THE EUCHARIST

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

We participate in the Eucharist

What are you looking for in following this practice?

Connection with the Divine... participation in a community of faith, of believers whose faith sustains us... looking for strength and a connection with the Divine that provides guidance for/in our lives... seeing others’ faith deepens our own faith... sense of a personal relationship with God... satisfying our need to express gratitude, to praise and celebrate the life of Christ, our lives and the lives of all those we connect with.

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

The sense of a personal relationship with God strengthens us. Going to Mass challenges us to live out the radical political message of Jesus (including the liberation of women).

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

We miss the fact that we're not a Christian group any more or can speak openly in Christian terms, because for most of us, the religious dimension of the Grail was the basic reason we joined. We share in prayer for all our sisters in the Grail. The sense of moving humanity forward toward the Grail's vision is fueled by our Catholic faith and participation in the Eucharist.

Music

What do you do in your spiritual practice group?

We sing. We practice listening. We seek harmony. We develop patience. We cooperate and discipline ourselves within the structure of the music and rehearsal situation. We meet our limitations and work to accept them. Struggle with bringing our individuality into harmony in service of the community.

Discipline of being in the present moment – to be aware of the creation of the music.

Letting the Spirit flow through us and through the music.

Growing through the music into confidence, trusting ourselves.

Helping to overcome challenges.

What are you looking for in following this practice?

Beauty	Inspiration	Search for the divine
Harmony	Giving voice to ideas	Matching music to a theme
Centering	Listening	Being with the <u>now</u> each time
Being part of a whole	Peace	Using talent for the benefit of others

How does this practice help you with living the life you want to live?

Relaxing; allows one to follow rather than leading

Satisfaction

Energizing

Fun, joy

Music helps express what we might not have been able to say ourselves

Grounding, centering

How does this practice fuel your Grail work?

It *is* our Grail work

Grail wouldn't be the same without music, singing

Essential to the fabric of the Grail

Integrates spirituality into work that we do (i.e., you can't be planning your day while singing)

Inspires others; pulls the broader group together

Helps us express what we feel/connects us in the Spirit