



Soul Matters

May 2017

*What Does It Mean To Be
A Community of Embodiment?*



What Does It Mean To Be A Community of Embodiment?

“I spend most time wondering if I should be somewhere else. Instead, I’m learning to shape the words “thank you” with my first breath each morning. My last breath each night. So when the very last breath comes, at least I will know I was grateful for all the places I was so sure I was not supposed to be. ”

- Sarah Kay, Poet, from The Paradox

We spend so much time in disappointment. We worry we’re missing out. We long for something better. Focused on how imperfect or incomplete our current situation is, we hunger for elsewhere.

And if not embodied in disappointment, we at least try our best to live in that place called “on our way.” We tell ourselves that the current situation is only temporary; we’re really better than this and meant for something bigger. This current embodiment is only a stepping stone.

And, of course, any good psychologist, smart life coach, or savvy talk show host will tell us that, by doing this, we’re missing out on peace. Striving for that “perfect life,” we miss out on the solace of the present moment. It’s a good message to pay attention to.

But religion wants to push us a bit harder. It wants us to see how we are out of touch, not only with the present moment, but also gratitude itself. The way back into real embodiment, it says, is not just through the skill of attention but also Sarah Kay’s skill of “shaping the words ‘thank you’ with our first and last breath.”

And not just the skill of ‘thank you,’ but the skill of listening as well. Every religion worth its salt will tell you that the reason to pay attention to the present moment is so that we can better hear what life and our hearts are trying to tell us! Embodied living is not simply about being grateful for the unnoticed gifts in front of us; it’s also about noticing that every moment and every context — no matter how imperfect, messed up and incomplete — is trying to talk to us! The reason we are called to sink into and care for our bodies is not just to relieve stress; it’s so that our body’s voice no longer gets drowned out by all the other noise. The reason we are called to allow nature to embody us is not simply so that we can feel our interconnectedness; it’s so that we can allow that interconnectedness to tell us its wisdom. The reason to stop trying so hard to change our current circumstances is not simply to “be here now;” it’s so that our current circumstances will finally be able to get a word in edgewise about where *it thinks* we should go!

And if we do this friends - if we shape our ‘thank you’s’ and take listening seriously – then that elusive gift of embodiment will be ours: that sacred sense of being exactly where we are supposed to be!

May this month’s work help all of us stumble back to and better embody that wonderful space!

Our Spiritual Exercises

Option A: Right Where You're Supposed to Be?

The packet introduction challenges us to lean into the spiritual practices of gratitude and deep listening. As it highlights, embodiment is not simply “being present”; it is also about engaging life with the sense that “this is right where I am supposed to be.” This exercise is about having that experience. Here are your instructions:

1. **Pick a random day on the May calendar.** Remember embodiment is not so much about setting aside special days to intentionally cultivate meaning as it is about using intention to notice that any and every day has significance. Picking your day at random honors that.
2. **Begin that day by “offering thanks.”** Do it in your own way. Even if you have to learn a new way to do it. Like the poet quoted in our introduction, we are all “learning to shape the words “thank you” with our first breath each morning.” Bottom line: find some way to begin the day by telling it and yourself that you are grateful it is about to begin.
3. **Center on the words “This is right where I am supposed to be.”** Before the day gets going, get yourself in the mindframe of this sentence. Meditate on it. Write it down and pin it up by your desk. Say it outloud to yourself throughout the day like a mantra. Do whatever it takes to ensure it shapes your attitude and perspective. Don't hesitate to lean on Sarah Kay's poem as one way of getting into the “right where I am supposed to be” mindframe:
<http://poetryisanemotioninwords.tumblr.com/post/96928884837/when-i-am-inside-writing-all-i-can-think-about>
4. **Start listening.** Like our introduction says, the whole point of paying attention is for us to “better hear what life and our hearts are trying to tell us.” So spend the day listening to what life and your heart are trying to tell you, ask you, and invite you to lean into.
5. **End with thank you...and a thank you note.** The poet talks about shaping “thank you” with both our first and last breath. See how that works for you. As a way of saying thank you, write a paragraph or two about why this particular day of yours was “exactly where you were supposed to be.”

Come to your group ready to share your note and your experience.

Option B: The Question We Embody

“Hearing about [others’] first, big question got me wondering about my own. What is the question that I asked as a little girl and have never stopped asking? How has asking that question defined, even if unconsciously, the choices I’ve made, the things I’ve created, the legacy I will leave behind?” -Courtney Martin

Courtney Martin sees our lives as embodiments of our “first big questions.” This exercise asks us to take that proposition seriously. Instead of a complex set of steps, your instructions are simply:

Spend the month figuring out and articulating your “first big question” and identify one way it has shaped you and one way it is calling you to change or deepen.

So... What question have you been trying to embody your entire life? What question has embodied you whether you liked it or not? What is the question that you asked as a little kid and have never stopped asking?

Check out the rest of Martin’s essay for more inspiration:

http://onbeing.org/blog/courtney-martin-what-was-your-first-question/?utm_source=On+Being+Newsletter&utm_campaign=88165ac167-20170311_bessel_van_der_kolk_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1c66543c2f-88165ac167-69930665&goal=0_1c66543c2f-88165ac167-69930665&mc_cid=88165ac167&mc_eid=cb4e45abe0

Option C: Embody Your Privilege

The embodiment of (or lack of) privilege is arguably *the* defining characteristic of our relationships and our life’s trajectory. And yet most of us in this culture are taught to ignore privilege, even pretend that it doesn’t exist. The website BuzzFeed has created a powerful video and shared a challenging set of questions to help us get in touch with our privilege and its consequences. So, for this exercise:

- go to the BuzzFeed website:
<http://www.vagabomb.com/What-Is-Privilege-Let-This-Demonstrative-Experiment-Answer-That-for-You/>
- read the article
- watch the video, and then
- reflect on the questions that are shared.
- Find a way to participate in the experiment/questionnaire either by organizing a handful of your friends or imagining yourself doing it with a circle of your family, neighbors and co-workers.
- Come to your group ready to share what it means to begin to embody and be aware of your privilege.

Option D: A Love Letter to Your Body

Deep Breaths are like little love notes to your body. - Anon

In a vulnerable and insightful [essay](#), Christine Valters Paintner asks, “How many of us treat our bodies with the lavish attention they deserve? What does it mean to treat our bodies like the temples they really are? What is the damage caused by the endless messages we receive each day about our bodies' inadequacies? What if for one day we could put to rest the damaging stories we tell ourselves about how our bodies don't measure up? What if we could bring our full presence to our bodies' needs instead of endlessly ignoring them?...What if our bodies truly were an "inexhaustible source of sanctification" and we treated them as such?”

She goes on to challenge us to “write a love letter to your body, offering both gratitude and forgiveness. Instead of using words, offer it in food, in warmth, in touch... Instead of rushing from place to place until you crash into bed exhausted, allow holy pauses to breathe deeply, take a long bath as an act of offering, lavish yourself with oil. Prepare a nourishing meal for just yourself. Eat chocolate, but make sure it is the deepest, darkest, richest kind you can find and eat it with as much attention as you can summon. Make an appointment for a massage and receive some loving touch imagining that you are being anointed for blessing others.”

So there you have it. Paintner lays out this exercise plan and simple:

“Write a love letter to your body, offering both gratitude and forgiveness. Instead of using words, offer it in food, in warmth, in touch... “

If you find yourself struggling with what this might mean for you or if you want to go take this further, consider another simple blessing or love letter. Spend a morning or evening completing the following list of sentences:

1. To my *mind* I say thanks. It has helped me hold on to memory, dream bigger dreams and correct the sometimes confusing and confused voices in my head. ***I especially thank it for the time it...***
2. To my *eyes* I say thanks. They have helped me perceive life more widely and anew. ***I especially thank them for the time they...***
3. To my *ears* I say thanks. They have helped me take in beauty, new ideas and the wisdom and pain of others. ***I especially thank them for the time they...***
4. To my *throat and voice* I say thanks. It has enabled me to speak into existence the me that is truly me. It has helped me bravely speak out, offer soft words of comfort to others and sing myself back into joy. ***I especially thank it for the time it...***
5. To my *heart* I say thanks. It has been broken, allowed itself to mend and was brave enough to trust again. ***I especially thank it for the time it...***
6. To my *body's sensuality* I say thanks. It has helped love and feel loved. It has allowed me to know intimacy and experience a self that extends beyond the limits of my own skin. ***I especially thank it for the time it...***
7. To my *hands* I say thanks. They have allowed me the gift of good work. They have held others and allowed me to hold on tight to those I needed most. They have also been brave enough to let go. ***I especially thank them for the time they...***
8. To my *feet* I say thanks. They have led me on adventures and helped me stand tall. They have allowed me to dance and feel every ounce of my joy. They have made me move forward when my heart wanted to run in fear. ***I especially thank them for the time they...***

Your Question

As always, don't treat these questions like "homework" or a list that needs to be covered in its entirety. Instead, simply pick the one question that speaks to you most and let it lead you where you need to go. The goal of these questions is not to help you analyze what Embodiment means, but to figure out what being a part of a community of embodiment means for you and your daily living. So, which question is calling to you? Which one contains "your work"?

- 1. Have you found a way to embody your deepest insight?**
- 2. What family legacy are you embodying and living out? Is that legacy a blessing or a burden?**
- 3. When was the last time you felt that "this is exactly where I am supposed to be!"?**
- 4. Have you found your place yet?**
- 5. Have you embodied and embraced your shadow side as well as your light?**
(<http://www.wisdompills.com/2015/10/24/embodying-your-shadow-what-it-means-and-how-to-do-it/>)
- 6. When was the last time you listened to your body? What is your body saying right now?**
- 7. When was the last time you "found God" through your body and senses?**
- 8. Do you embody(embrace) or deny your pain?**
- 9. Do you embody or deny your joy?**
- 10. Have you forgiven your body for letting you down? For betraying you?**
- 11. Have you thanked your body for all its carried and given you?**
- 12. Have you allowed yourself to become embodied in and swallowed up by stress?**
(<http://www.radiolab.org/story/91580-stress/>)
- 13. What new story is your body trying to tell?**
- 14. What might it look and feel like to embody silence and stillness?**
- 15. Has your embodiment of the role of soldier turned out the way others promised?**
- 16. Has your embodiment of the role of mother turned out the way you expected?**
- 17. Who is asking you to embody the role of "mother" for them right now?**
- 18. What embodiment are you longing to break out of?**
- 19. What's your question?** Your question may not be listed above. As always, if the above questions don't include what life is asking from you, spend the month listening to your days to hear it.

Recommended Resources

As always, this is not required reading. We will not analyze or dissect these pieces in our group. They are simply meant to companion you on your journey this month, get your thinking started, and maybe open you to new ways of thinking about what it means to be a community of Embodiment

Word Roots

em- prefix meaning “put in or into, bring to a certain state”

body - *bodig* from Old English “trunk, chest of a man or animal”

ment – suffix referring to the result of an action
The Aramaic/Hebrew word *nephesh* comes from the root to breathe. Body, breath, and consciousness are connected through this word.

Wise Words

Don't explain your philosophy. Embody it.
- *Epictetus*

The purpose of life is not to transcend the body,
but to embody the transcendent.
- *The Dalai Lama*

Each of us *are* the face of God in this world, and
God's voice and hands.
- *Rev. Galen Guengerich, UU Minister*

No spiritual treasure to be found apart from the
bodily experiences of human life on earth... My
life depends on ignoring all touted distinctions
between the secular and the sacred, the physical
and the spiritual, the body and the soul...

Whoever you are, you are human. Wherever you
are, you live in the world, which is just waiting
for you to notice the holiness in it... Earth is so
thick with divine possibility that it is a wonder
we can walk anywhere without cracking our
shins on altars. -*Barbara Brown Taylor*

If love were only spiritual,
The practices of fasting and prayer would not
exist.

The gifts lovers give each other
Are nothing but outward forms
But they testify to invisible love,
Just as outward acts of kindness
Reveal a loving heart.

- *Rumi*

Blessing for the Senses

May your body be blessed.

May you realize that your body is a faithful
and beautiful friend of your soul.

And may you be peaceful and joyful
and recognize that your senses
are sacred thresholds.

May you realize that holiness is
mindful, gazing, feeling, hearing, and touching.
May your senses gather you and bring you
home.

May your senses always enable you to
celebrate the universe and the mystery
and possibilities in your presence here.
May the Eros of the Earth bless you.

-*John O'Donohue*

The body is a sacred garment. It's your first and
last garment; it is what you enter life in and what
you depart life with, and it should be treated
with honor. - *Martha Graham*

If anything is sacred, the human body is sacred.
-*Walt Whitman*

Deep Breaths are like little love notes to your
body. - *Anon*

The Paradox by Sarah Kay

When I am inside writing,
all I can think about is how I should be outside
living.

When I am outside living,
all I can do is notice all there is to write about.
When I read about love, I think I should be out
loving.

When I love, I think I need to read more....
I spend most of my time wondering
if I should be somewhere else.

So I have learned to shape the words thank
you...

Full poem found at:

<http://poetryisanemotioninwords.tumblr.com/post/96928884837/when-i-am-inside-writing-all-i-can-think-about>

Hear Sarah Kay read it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StE7b5mRWHk>

Here by Wislawa Szymborska

A celebration of being embodied on this earth and in this body!

I don't know about other places,
but here on Earth there's quite a lot of
everything.
Maybe somewhere else there are similar places,
But no one considers them beautiful.
Maybe like nowhere else, or in few other places,
here you have your own body trunk,
and with it the tools needed,
to add your children to those of others.
Besides that your hands, legs, and the amazed
head...

Full poem found at

<http://duszenko.northern.edu/szymborska/here.html>

No one longs for what he or she already has, and yet the accumulated insight of those wise about the spiritual life suggests that the reason so many of us cannot see the red X that marks the spot is because we are standing on it. The treasure we seek requires no lengthy expedition, no expensive equipment, no superior aptitude or special company. All we lack is the willingness to imagine that we already have everything we need. The only thing missing is our consent to be where we are. -*Barbara Brown Taylor*

To Hear the Falling World

Only if I move my arm a certain way,
it comes back.
Or the way the light bends in the trees
this time of year,
so a scrap of sorrow, like a bird, lights on the
heart.
I carry this in my body, seed
in an unswept corner, husk-encowled and
seeming safe.
But they guard me, these small pains,
from growing sure
of myself and perhaps forgetting.
-*Jane Hirshfield*

I keep looking for one more teacher, only to find that fish learn from water and birds learn from sky. If you want to learn about the sea, it helps to be at sea. If you want to learn about compassion, it helps to be in love. If you want to learn about healing, it helps to know of suffering. The strong live in the storm without worshipping the storm. - *Mark Nepo*

In my theology, the doctrine of (the) Incarnation shouldn't be 'outsourced' to the life of Jesus of

Nazareth. Living into a consciously embodied life IS the incarnation."

- *Chela Sloper, Soul Matters member*

The Way In

Sometimes the way to milk and honey is through the body.

Sometimes the way in is a song.

But there are three ways in the world:
dangerous, wounding,
and beauty.

To enter stone, be water.

To rise through hard earth, be plant
desiring sunlight, believing in water.

To enter fire, be dry.

To enter life, be food.

-*Linda Hogan*

Your Body Is Welcome Here

Your body is welcome here, all of it.

Yes, even that part. And that part. And yes, even that part.

The parts you love, and the parts you don't.

For in this place we come with all that we are

All that we have been,

And all that we are going to be...

- *Rev. Sean Neil-Barron*

<http://www.uua.org/worship/words/opening/your-body-welcome-here>

I think it is important to pray naked in front of a full-length mirror sometimes, especially when you are full of loathing for your body. ...

You have gotten glimpses of your body as you have bathed or changed clothes, but so far maintaining your equilibrium has depended upon staying covered up as much as you can...

This can only go on so long, especially for someone who officially believes that God loves flesh and blood, no matter what kind of shape it is in.

Whether you are sick or well, lovely or irregular, there comes a time when it is vitally important for your spiritual health to drop your clothes, look in the mirror, and say, 'Here I am. This is the body-like- no-other that my life has shaped. I live here. This is my soul's address.'

After you have taken a good look around, you may decide that there is a lot to be thankful for, all things considered.

Bodies take real beatings. That they heal from most things is an underrated miracle. That they

give birth is beyond reckoning... Here we sit, with our souls tucked away in this marvelous luggage, mostly insensible to the ways in which every spiritual practice begins with the body.
-Barbara Brown Taylor

Embodying our Family Legacy

“A legacy is something that is passed on to you that you have no control over,” Christian singer Rich Mullins once said. “There are all kinds of things that are pushed on us and we have no say over, and they shape the way we see everything.”

My family has left me a legacy of alcoholism, severed relationships, depression, and fiery anger. My father tried his best to protect me from the dark side of our legacy. He cut off some family, built walls around interactions with others, and tried to raise us to be strong, moral, sober, God-fearing people. He taught me all that matters is who you are, and how you follow God.

Through this attempt to keep us safe, I was left feeling as if I were standing in a vast, dark world and the light I held could only illumine my siblings and parents. What else might be out there? Could any of it be good? ... I am who I am because of my people.”

-Tessi Muskrat Rickabaugh,
<http://www.sdiworld.org/blog/legacy>

You never realize how much of your background is sewn into the lining of your clothes. -Thomas Wolfe

Between the World and Me

Here is what I would like for you to know: In America, it is traditional to destroy the black body – it is heritage.

Enslavement was not merely the antiseptic borrowing of labor – it is not so easy to get a human being to commit their body against its own elemental interest. And so enslavement must be casual wrath and random manglings, the gnashing of heads and brains blown out over the river as the body seeks to escape. It must be rape so regular as to be industrial.

There is no uplifting way to say this. I have no praise anthems, nor old Negro spirituals. The spirit and soul are the body and brain, which are destructible – that is precisely why they are so precious.

And the soul did not escape. The spirit did not steal away on gospel wings. The soul was the body that fed the tobacco, and the spirit was the blood that watered the cotton, and these created the first fruits of the American garden.
- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *from Between the World and Me*

God Made Mud

God made mud.
God got lonesome.
So God said to some of the mud, “Sit up!”
“See all I’ve made,” said God, “the hills, the sea, the sky, the stars.”
And I was some of the mud that got to sit up and look around.
Lucky me, lucky mud.
I, mud, sat up and saw what a nice job God had done.
Nice going, God.
Nobody but you could have done it, God! I certainly couldn’t have.
I feel very unimportant compared to You.
The only way I can feel the least bit important is to think of all the mud that didn’t even get to sit up and look around.
I got so much, and most mud got so little.
Thank you for the honor!
Now mud lies down again and goes to sleep.
What memories for mud to have!
What interesting other kinds of sitting-up mud I met!
I loved everything I saw!
Good night.
- Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

Let me put it this way –
I am wildly, irrevocably in love
with the world.
And you –
you wonderful, beautiful, brave
spark of creation –
you are inseparable from the world.
I breathe you in.
I take your story into me,
and it lodges
in my soul.
We will never be
two separate things again –
if ever we were.
-Rev Leslie Mills, *UU Church of Elgin, IL*

Funny

What's it like to be a human the bird asked
I myself don't know
it's being held prisoner by your skin
while reaching infinity
being a captive of your scrap of time
while touching eternity
being hopelessly uncertain
and helplessly hopeful
being a needle of frost
and a handful of heat
breathing in the air
and choking wordlessly
it's being on fire
with a nest made of ashes
eating bread
while filling up on hunger
it's dying without love
it's loving through death
That's funny said the bird
and flew effortlessly up into the air
-Anna Kamienska

Articles

The Shared Experience of Built Sacred Spaces

by Sarah Smarsh

What does your church space embody? Even on a humble patch of flat grassland, there's a recognizable energy field inside a place designated for speaking with God. How could there not be in a building that has contained so many prayers and songs, so many tears over dead farmers in open caskets, so many smiles at crying babies with holy water running down their cheeks?...

<https://onbeing.org/blog/when-the-physical-becomes-secondary-the-shared-experience-of-built-sacred-spaces/>

Embracing "Today's Body"

How to shift from a "fix it" mindset to approaching the body with more kindness and acceptance.

In a recent yoga class I attended, the teacher, when she moved us through the poses, used the term "today's body." She didn't say your body or even the body, but today's body. I liked the unexpected playfulness of that expression. Immediately it made my body feel more acceptable, less personal, and at the same time more connected with the other people in the

room—and their bodies. We all have a "today's body."...

<http://www.mindful.org/two-mindfulness-practices-get-back-touch-body/>

Six Ways to Be Embodied While You Eat

Informal mindfulness practices for those of us who don't have five minutes to contemplate a raisin.

<http://www.mindful.org/6-ways-practice-mindful-eating/>

The Body Divided

by Ona Gritz

from the Bellingham Review & Utne Reader

A woman with cerebral palsy gets comfortable in her own skin

<http://www.utne.com/arts/the-body-divided>

Podcasts and Online

Black Privilege

by Crystal Valentine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rYL83kHO8Y>

Who We Want to Become: Beyond the New Jim Crow

What world do we want to embody? What does it look like to embody hope and justice as a culture? The civil rights lawyer Michelle Alexander calls the punitive culture that has emerged the 'new Jim Crow,' and is making it visible in the name of a fierce hope and belief in our collective capacity to engender the transformation to which this moment is calling.

<http://www.onbeing.org/programs/michelle-alexander-who-we-want-to-become-beyond-the-new-jim-crow/>

How Trauma Lodges in the Body –On Being Podcast

Human memory is a sensory experience, says psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk. Through his longtime research and innovation in trauma treatment, he shares what he's learning about how bodywork like yoga or eye movement therapy can restore a sense of goodness and safety.

<http://www.stitcher.com/podcast/on-being-with-krista-tippett/e/bessel-van-der-kolk-how-trauma-lodges-in-the-body-49386808>

Why Is the World So Beautiful?

The world's beauty as an embodiment of truth. Nobel physicist Frank Wilczek sees beauty as a compass for truth, discovery, and meaning. His book, *A Beautiful Question*, is a long meditation on the question: "Does the world embody beautiful ideas?" He's the unusual scientist willing to analogize his discoveries about the deep structure of reality with deep meaning in the human everyday.

<http://www.onbeing.org/programs/frank-wilczek-why-is-the-world-so-beautiful/>

Where Am I? – RadioLab Podcast

...OK. Maybe you're in your desk chair. You're in your office. You're in New York, or Detroit, or Timbuktu. You're on planet Earth. But where are you, really? This hour, Radiolab tries to find out. How does your brain keep track of your body? We examine the bond between brain and body, and look at what happens when it breaks.

<http://www.radiolab.org/story/91524-where-am-i/>

The Secret Emotional Life of Clothes

Do clothes have the power to transform us? A show featuring seven separate stories about how the clothes we wear affect us [and embody us] more than we think (though perhaps less than we hope).

<http://www.npr.org/programs/invisibilia/485605882/the-secret-emotional-life-of-clothes?showDate=2016-07-22>

The Dress

by Jessi Klein

The Moth podcast

What do you do when the wedding dress you are pressured to wear doesn't embody the values you hold dear?

<https://themoth.org/stories/the-dress>

Embodying and Accepting our Beauty

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aW8BDgLPZkI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EMiCWknznTU>

Do You Embody Your Body With Joy?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0tEcxLDDd4>

Music

What If God Was One Of Us - Joan Osborne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Gx1Pv02w3Q>

Covers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeXY678B7pM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNXAxfbAXk>

Everybody Here Is a Cloud

Cloud Cult

...And everybody here is a cloud
And everybody here will evaporate this
You came up off the ground
From a million little pieces
Have you found where your place is?
Have you found where your place is?...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28IjHKVU6mo>

Right Here Right Now

Jesus Jones

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwpisToHzAE>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kA_oAccWMCm

Connected

by Brian Tate performed by City Soul Choir

I am a part of you. You are a part of me. And so together we are one body...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUKyWJ7DSg0>

Movies

I Am Not Your Negro

An inspiring documentary on the legacy of African-American writer and activist, James Baldwin. A raw and moving engagement with our embodiment of racism.

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5ZeLuVHTbg>
Review:

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28329/i-am-not-your-negro>

Captain Fantastic

An astonishing, touching and inspiring film about an unconventional father trying to make his life and parenting an embodiment of his values. Also an exploration of what happens when those values are not also embodied by the surrounding society.

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/captain_fantastic

My Love, Don't Cross That River

A jubilant celebration of commitment, intimacy and embodying a single life, together.

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/my_love_dont_cross_that_river

Review:

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28206/my-love-dont-cross-that-river>

Gleason

An emotionally rich documentary about a former NFL star and his wife finding ways to embody a rich life despite the debilitatingations caused by ALS.

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/gleason_2016

Review:

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/films/reviews/view/28237/gleason>

In Defense of Food

A documentary challenging us to embody our values and our awareness in our eating.

https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/in_defense_of_food

Books

Grounded: Finding God in the World

by Diana Butler Bass

Bass argues that what appears to be a decline actually signals a major transformation in how people understand and experience God. The distant God of conventional religion has given way to a more embodied sense of the sacred that is with us in the world...in the soil, the water, the sky, in our homes and neighborhoods, and in the global commons.

<http://dianabutlerbass.com/books/grounded-finding-god-in-the-world-a-spiritual-revolution/>

An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith

by Barbara Brown Taylor

Taylor shares how she learned to find God beyond the church walls by embracing the sacred in the natural parts of everyday life.” “There is no spiritual treasure to be found apart from the bodily experiences of human life on the earth.

<https://www.amazon.com/Altar-World-Geography-Faith/dp/0061370479>

<http://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/book-reviews/view/18828/an-altar-in-the-world>

A Beautiful Question: Finding Nature’s Deep Design

by Frank Wilczek

Nobel physicist Frank Wilczek sees beauty as a compass for truth, discovery, and meaning. His book, *A Beautiful Question*, is a long meditation on the question: “Does the world embody beautiful ideas?”

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/01/a-beautiful-question-natures-deep-design-frank-wilczek-review>

Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking

by Susan Cain

A call for introverts to embody their needed version of leadership! Leaders needn’t be the loudest. Leadership is not about theater. It’s not about dominance. It is about putting the lives of others before any other priority.

<https://www.amazon.com/Quiet-Power-Introverts-World-Talking/dp/0307352153>

Landscapes of Aging and Spirituality: Essays

Nineteen UU writers reflect on embodying the experience of aging and the spirituality of aging. Alternately tender and frank, funny and wistful, these heartfelt ruminations offer companionship for those walking and embracing the journey of later life.

<https://www.amazon.com/Landscapes-Aging-Spirituality-Kathleen-Montgomery/dp/1558967591>

GA panel discussion with some of the authors:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WqSLHt5seI8>

Between the World and Me

by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Although the book has been widely praised as a monumental text about black life, it’s more specifically a book about how to live free in a black male body.

Review: <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/ta-nehisi-coates-and-a-generation-waking-up>

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