

Re-Construct

Question: What would your experience be like if your faith was as strong as you could possibly imagine?

Jesus used parables to teach people about doing life differently, informed by a deep relationship with the Divine. He called it living in the Kingdom of God, which he claimed wasn't something in the future but rather a reality to be lived within here and now. His favorite word for The Divine was Abba, which means Dad or Daddy – an incredibly provocative, intimate name inferring that relationship with God was not relegated to a head trip or doctrine but as personal as it can get.

One of his best-known parables was about a father and his two sons, the last story of three about the lost and found (Luke 15:11-32 MSG):

Then he said, "There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, I want right now what's coming to me.'

"So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to feel it. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corn-cobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

"That brought him to his senses. He said, 'All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.' He got right up and went home to his father.

"When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: 'Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again.'

"But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, 'Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a prize-winning heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here – given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!' And they began to have a wonderful time.

"All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, 'Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.'

"The older brother stomped off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, 'Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!'

"His father said, 'Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!'"

This is a brilliant story with great depth, especially when aware of its cultural and historical context. The young son could not have done something more offensive to his father. He was essentially saying, *I wish you were dead*. The audience would have gasped. The father's decision to grant his request instead of kicking him out of the house (and his life) would have made the crowd laugh in disbelief. Hearing that the young Jewish fool wasted everything and ended up envying spiritually unclean pigs would have sounded like poetic justice. Learning of the young man's audacious decision to go home after breaking his father's heart would have made people incredulous, but not as much as the stately father's response. Running to greet him? Refusing to listen to an apology? Clothing him with a fine robe? Giving him access to his riches symbolized by the signet ring? Throwing a lavish party? The reaction of the crowd is expressed by the older son who never left the family estate. Disbelief. Anger. Hardened heart.

This parable is most often known by the title, *The Prodigal Son*, which is misleading. The prodigiousness of the younger son's waste was far outdone by the overwhelming, limitless, almost embarrassing amount of grace and love bestowed by the father. And the prodigious amount of hate and anger displayed by the older son who, in his despondency caused great pain himself, was outmatched by the dad's expression of love and grace in inviting him to the party. This is the story of a family of prodigals, with the father being the most prodigious.

This is also a story about coming and being home. The younger son had to travel halfway around the world to discover that what he really wanted could be found where he began in the first place. The older son never left yet was never really present to what was there. Both sons were lost. Both were met by the father with unlimited grace and invitation to return home, to actually *be* home where grace overflowed in unlimited abundance.

*Questions: How do you relate to the Prodigals story?
Are you living at home where love and grace abound?*

German Sociologist Hartmut Rosa has offered great insight in his books, highlighting how our cultural machine is designed to wear us out when what we are really looking for is deep connection to other people, the world in which we live, ourselves, and in the process The Divine however we name it. This dynamic, responsive way of life is living “at home”, in the prodigious, lavish abundance of love and grace wherever we find ourselves. It is a way of living and being that lives in connection with everyone and everything, walking together on The Ground of Being we refer to as God or Spirit. Tripp Fuller paraphrases Rosa’s vision here ([full podcast here](#)):

*German sociologist Hartmut Rosa proposes **resonance** as the criterion for a good life. Resonance is not a feeling or an emotion. It’s a mode of relationship—a way of being in the world characterized by mutual responsiveness. Think of two tuning forks: strike one, and the other begins to vibrate in response. Think of a conversation where you feel truly heard, and something shifts in you. Think of a moment in nature, or music, or prayer, where you were touched by something beyond yourself and found yourself responding.*

Questions: How does resonance sound to you?

How is it similar or dissimilar to your vision of living in strong faith?

Faith reconstruction is about building our lives to allow resonance room to thrive. It often includes removing ideas and behavior that don’t align even if tradition holds them dear. In CrossWalk’s language, we talk about Shalom being our North Star, which is completely congruent with Jesus’ language about living in the Kingdom of God. Recall that Jesus removed ways of believing and behaving when those beliefs and behaviors were not aligned with Shalom.

Reconstruction also often invites us to reconsider the rhythms of our life. In light of Rosa’s assertions, we may need to spend a minute reflecting on how we have constructed our lives the way we have and why. Have we just adopted the way of the machine that is designed to suck the life out of us? Are we so busy with busyness and achieving that we struggle to live the resonant way of life?

Dana Hicks recommends – with multiple chapters illustrating his passion – that we adopt old technologies (that may be new to us) as a way to foster such resonance, such deep spirituality. Meditation tops his list because it works to get us out of our Default Mode Network our brain has adopted for survival. Slowing down, breathing deeply in order to recognize all that is influencing us in the moment, letting it go in order to see ourselves more clearly, connecting to Spirit in such sacred space – it’s pretty hard to beat. I think Jesus wholeheartedly agreed, given that he was known to break away, alone, early in the morning and also after episodes of being with crowds of people. Robert Wirght notes that “when the default mode network subsides—when the mind stops wandering—it can be a good feeling. There can be a sense of liberation from your chattering mind, a sense of peace, even deep peace” ([Why Buddhism is True](#), p. 47).

There are various forms of meditating to help different kinds of personalities. For some, the classic focusing on breath comes easy. In that space we can recognize, as Rumi did: *Do you know what you are? You are a manuscript of a divine letter. You are a mirror reflecting a noble face. This universe is not outside of you. Look inside yourself; everything that you want, you are already that.* Sometimes a guided meditation is easier for us – there are lots of apps for that. Sometimes we need to take a note from John Muir’s playbook, who advised his readers:

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy while the cares will drop off like autumn leaves.

Thích Nhất Hạnh would later note:

People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don’t even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child—our own two eyes. All is a miracle (The Miracle of Mindfulness, Boston: Beacon Press, 1999, p.12).

Getting lost in music is another way we can get beyond ourselves. There is a power in singing choruses that center us over and over again. It drives the efficient part of us crazy, because we get caught up in counting how many times we’ve already sung the same line! Perhaps not enough! Perhaps we need to sing it as many times as it takes us to stop counting and start letting the words and music speak deeply to us. Michael Gungor’s Mystic Hymnal Project is about creating and recreating songs we can sing together that facilitate this very thing. What happens in us when we sing the lovingkindness meditation? What is exchanged when we sing “be still and know that I am God,” paring the phrase down until we are the “be” of simply being? How are we impacted singing of our weariness and claiming that all of us is welcome, and every part of us is good?

These and other spiritual practices are all ways of coming home. To ourselves. To life. To love. To The Divine. We don’t need to travel to Tibet to get there. Home is here. And we need to be reminded that we can be home without really being home. Grace, love, peace, wellbeing, life, The Divine are always right here, right now.

Questions: What practices help you come home and stay home? What keeps you from realizing you are already home?