

Based on the book "An Altar in the World" by Barbara Brown Taylor
Week Four Reading - Chapters 7 & 8

Week Four Discussion Questions

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive, and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive." - Howard Thurman

Optional Small Group Check-in for this Week

Tell 3 jobs that you have held, but only two of them are true. Let the group guess which job is fabricated.

1. Take a few minutes to see if anyone had an experience or insight when engaging the homework practices from week three.
2. Taylor admits that she did not have a single clue what she would do after she graduated from seminary. (P. 109) "Then one night when my whole heart was open to hearing from God what I was supposed to do with my life, God said, 'Anything that pleases you... Do anything that pleases you and belong to me'." (P. 110) If you received that message directly from "God", [*your soul, the Universe, Holy Spirit - whatever speaks to you*] would it change anything for you? Do you ever struggle with wondering if you are doing what "God" wants you to do? Please discuss.
3. Taylor explains that every job offers the chance to choose kindness over meanness and to recognize the divine in human form or to act like a jerk. What practices do you have for engaging your work with kindness and a sustained sense of purpose?
4. Taylor concludes the chapter on a profound note: "It may be chopping wood and it may be running a corporation. Whatever it is, perhaps you will hold open the possibility that doing it is one way to learn what it means to become more fully human, as you press beyond being good to being good for something, in a world with the perfect job for someone like you." In what jobs - large or small - have you discovered a sense of purpose of being "good for something"? Was this work paid or unpaid? Did that make a difference?
5. How good are you at saying no? What helps you say no? What hinders you from saying no? How has this affected your life?
6. How would you describe your relationship with being busy? How do you feel when you relax, take time for yourself and do nothing?

Notes:

Week Four Practices

1. Chose a day to reflect in the evening and journal on these questions. *"What was my purpose today? How was I good for something that matters to me? Did I say "yes" when I wanted/needed to say "no"?"*
2. Chose one day to meditate on this and affirm it throughout your day. "I can do anything that pleases me, and I can be an instrument of God/Love".
3. On page 138 Taylor proposes an exercise. "Make two lists on one piece of paper. On one side of the paper list all of the things you know *give you life* that you never take time to do. Then, on the other side, make a list of all the reasons why you think it is impossible for you to do those things." Determine if you want to stop there or spend time clearing out some "impossibilities".