

## Learning To Move In The Dark Week 2

What if it is while we are in the dark, that we grow the most?



Like the moon, our experiences of the light waxes and wanes. Through the exploration of darkness, we can find courage. We do come to understand the world in new ways. When we open ourselves to a lunar spirituality, we begin to feel God's presence around us, guiding us through things seen and unseen.

Welcome and Opening Ourselves:

### THE TWO OLD GRANDFATHERS

My two old grandfathers sat before New England houses and looked over the fields of grain and wheat, The apple-orchards, the pastures, the woods and copses, The swamp land where cattle-prints showed in a black ooze, The stony hillside where sheep nibbled, And my two old grandfathers thought their silent thoughts. One, gentle, humble, patient, meditated on the love of God for humanity, God's children ; On the peace of a certain eternity. The death of self, on pain as a teacher, and the beauty of holiness and meek submission to unquestioned creeds.

The other, keen, scoffing, courageous, dared to defy the minds of those around him. Protested, not by words but independent against the blind intolerance of fools. Read his Voltaire to sound of Sunday church-bells. Smiled to himself, sitting alone, unasked at the disfavor of humanity its weight and value.

Here am I " my hands full of the spoils of cities." My brain puzzled by creeds and theories, groping, bewildered, for truth and justice. I try to free myself, to rise above conditions, to think my own thoughts, careless and untrammled " But the thoughts of those two old grandfathers, sitting alone before New England houses, sway, alternately, my inner vision. I am held and hampered by conflicting forces.

Helen Granville Barker, Songs in the Cities and Gardens

Covenant:

- I will be open to hearing new truths and new possibilities.
- I will actively listen, even if I do not share the same perspective, in case God is opening me to a new revelation.
- I will pass if I am uncomfortable with sharing and will allow others to do the same without judgement.
- I will use I statements, as I can only speak for myself.
- I will not interrupt when someone else is speaking.
- I will not interpret when someone else is speaking.
- I will be brief when sharing to allow others an opportunity to share.
- I agree to keep confidential others stories, as they are not mine but theirs to share
- I agree that two opposing viewpoints can both be true

## Guided Meditation:

Close your eyes and settle into a quiet, interior, space within ...

Now, take a moment to note anything you felt, heard, sensed, or saw that brought you insight, clarity, or peace ...

## Introspection

With the moon as my guide, I am on the move too, wondering about the link between inner and outer space. If outer darkness is the cloud where we store our inner fears, how much will the real world suffer from our collective fear of the dark? How much will we pay to fuel the engines that keep our world lit, rather than doing what is necessary to feel safer inside ourselves?

- ⊕ Can you remember when you heard anyone use 'dark' to describe something good?
- ⊕ Why might this be?
- ⊕ How can we begin to think of dark positively?
- ⊕ How might we begin to engage more with inner darkness by taking steps to allow more outward darkness?

## In the Beginning

If The Word (Jesus) existed in the beginning, then The Word existed before light. If all things came into being through God, Then God and The Word are darkness.

- How does hearing Genesis 1:1-5 and John 1:1-3 change the way you think of darkness? Why?
- How does it change the way you feel about darkness? Why?



## Group Sharing >



We should care about the cost to us about the illumination of the night, because our inner and outer worlds are so closely related. For a candid photo of what is on your mind, take a look at your desk. For a measure of your comfort with the dark, notice how many lights you leave on at night. Is one sufficient or do you prefer more? Is a bright home sufficient or does the yard need to be lit too? In these ways and more,

our comfort or discomfort with the outer dark is a good barometer of how we feel about the inner kind.

After reading the quote aloud in your table group, please take turns sharing EITHER:

- What do you believe could be some of the cost to us of illuminating the night?
- Do you believe there is any truth the premise that your desk is a reflection of what is on your mind? Why or why not?
- Do you believe there is any truth to the premise that your comfort with darkness is reflected in the number of lights you leave on? Why or why not?
- How does your comfort or discomfort with outer darkness reflect your inner darkness?

Going Deeper >

Moses knew God as well as anyone ever had, yet God did not tone anything down for him. The mountain shook like it was about to blow apart. The cloud at the top of the mountain was so thick that even Moses could not see inside. Anyone else who even tried would die, God said - and Moses went anyway. He took the full dose of divine darkness and lived to tell about it, though God would remain a tremendous mystery to him for the rest of his life. After all they had been through - the plagues, the parting of the sea, the pillars of cloud and fire in the wilderness - God prevented Moses from entering the land of promise. "You broke faith with me," God said at the end. "Although you may view the land from a distance, you shall not enter it."

It is hard to get from a story like that a bumper sticker that says, "God is love." What would Moses say to people who feel free to ask God for good weekend weather and safe travel to away games? The God of Moses is not the grandfatherly type, a kind old deity who can be counted on to take the kids exciting places without letting them get hurt. The God of Moses is holy, offering no seat belts or other safety features to those who wish to climb the mountain and enter the dark cloud of divine presence. Those who go assume all risk and give up all claim to reward. Those who return say the dazzling dark inside the cloud is reward enough.



Group discussion>

Living into lunar spirituality and endarkenment allows us the freedom to embrace those feelings, things and ideas that resonate as true to our spirit and reject those feelings, things and ideas that injure our souls. If it is true that darkness may save us, and we embrace endarkenment as we have the light, how would your life, faith and way of being shift as we consider...

- ❖ God manifests as the dark cloud of divine presence and invites to climb the mountain and enter into the darkness.
- ❖ That entering the darkness has its risks AND rewards.
- ❖ If we turn away from darkness on principle, doing everything we can to avoid it because there is simply no telling what it contains, there a chance that what we are running from is God.

Affirmation:

In the same way, Gregory said, those of us who wish to draw near to God should not be surprised when our vision goes cloudy, for this is a sign that we are approaching the opaque splendor of God. If we decide to keep going beyond the point where our eyes or minds are any help to us, we may finally arrive at the pinnacle of the spiritual journey toward God, which exists in complete and dazzling darkness.

Closing:

The Night

By Henry Vaughan

*John 3.2*

Through that pure virgin shrine,  
That sacred veil drawn o'er Thy glorious noon,  
That men might look and live, as glowworms shine,  
And face the moon,  
Wise Nicodemus saw such light  
As made him know his God by night.

Most blest believer he!  
Who in that land of darkness and blind eyes  
Thy long-expected healing wings could see,  
When Thou didst rise!  
And, what can never more be done,  
Did at midnight speak with the Sun!

O who will tell me where  
He found Thee at that dead and silent hour?  
What hallowed solitary ground did bear  
So rare a flower,  
Within whose sacred leaves did lie  
The fullness of the Deity?

No mercy-seat of gold,  
No dead and dusty cherub, nor carved stone,  
But His own living works did my Lord hold  
And lodge alone;  
Where trees and herbs did watch and peep  
And wonder, while the Jews did sleep.

Dear night! this world's defeat;  
The stop to busy fools; care's check and curb;  
The day of spirits; my soul's calm retreat  
Which none disturb!  
Christ's progress, and His prayer time;  
The hours to which high heaven doth chime;

God's silent, searching flight;  
When my Lord's head is filled with dew, and all  
His locks are wet with the clear drops of night;  
His still, soft call;  
His knocking time; the soul's dumb watch,  
When spirits their fair kindred catch.

Were all my loud, evil days  
Calm and unhaunted as is thy dark tent,  
Whose peace but by some angel's wing or voice  
Is seldom rent,  
Then I in heaven all the long year

Would keep, and never wander here.

But living where the sun  
Doth all things wake, and where all mix and tire  
Themselves and others, I consent and run  
To every mire,  
And by this world's ill-guiding light,  
Err more than I can do by night.

There is in God, some say,  
A deep but dazzling darkness, as men here  
Say it is late and dusky, because they  
See not all clear.  
O for that night! where I in Him  
Might live invisible and dim!



Resource created by Rev. Vickey Gibbs