

30 Days of Spiritual Practice

CREATING A NEW DAILY PRACTICE



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Are you wanting to have a spiritual practice in your life, but aren't sure how or where to start? This 30 Day guide may help you, with 30 days of reflection and possibility to explore. There is no one right spiritual practice for all people, but this guide may help you find a practice that works for you and for your life right now. Commit to the daily habit, even if it is only 5 or 10 minutes a day, and take some time for you and your spirit to ground and to grow.

Day One:

What is a Daily Devotional Practice?

The name "devotional practice" comes from Christianity, and in that context it denotes something a Christian does daily to show their devotion to God. Usually it would be prayer or

reading the Bible, or both. It could also be a communal worship service. In an expanded and not Christian-based definition, I like this definition offered by a pagan practitioner, Melissa Hill:

Here's my definition of a Devotional Practice:

Devotional practice is a short ritualized action that an individual or group repeats on a regular basis in order to align themselves with a specific Spirit, Deity, Archetype, or spiritual Power. It can have words, but it doesn't have to. It is any action that has ritualized intent and is meant to connect you to the Other.

[What is a Devotional Practice? | Melissa Hill \(patheos.com\)](#)

While I like the definition, and it is adequately expansive to allow for many personal practices to apply, it did make me ask about my own practice What am I trying to connect to? I don't feel a connection to a personified Deity. I don't worship a certain God or Goddess, and while I do like to do some archetype work sometimes, that is not at the core of my practice.

It then occurred to me that what I am trying to connect with in my devotional practice isn't even just one thing. I'm trying to go deeper inward, and connect with my inner core. And I'm trying to go outward and connect with the transcendent, ineffable, elusive, and perhaps impossible to ever define. I'm also trying to connect with the world around me, with the interdependent universe and the natural world, and with people all around the world. And then I'm also trying to connect with the past and with the future!

Perhaps then my definition is:

Devotional practices are something an individual or group commits to doing on a regular basis that create touchstones for connection: within, among, beyond. Devotional practices are an exercise in expanding one's awareness, of taking the time to notice and experience all that is.

Question for your reflection:

What are you trying to connect to when you come to this, or any other, practice?

Day 2:

Why Devotion?

A devotional is just a specific type of spiritual practice. I define spiritual practice as anything an individual or group does with the intent of cultivating spiritual experiences or growth. Anything at all can be a spiritual practice if it is approached as such, and thus this is a broad umbrella term.

A devotional practice is, for me, about the small daily-ness of it. Perhaps I like this term “devotional” because it comes from “devoted”, as in something you are devoted to. It could just as easily be called a Daily Discipline, except that for me there is cultural and personal baggage around the word “discipline”. I grew up wanting to “be disciplined” meaning that I was strong and had good motivation and organization to work hard. And I also think of “discipline” as a judgment or punishment that is meted out, by parents, by judges, by drill sergeants. The word has a long history of use in spiritual practice contexts and deserves to be used and reclaimed as such, but for me it remains complicated.

Devotional, on the other hand, has connotations of love and a heart-centered feeling rather than an exercise of the will. To be devoted is to be loyal and true, to love steadily and perhaps unconditionally. A daily devotional practice is an expression of love.

As such it may present a problem that discipline does not, namely the problem of what to do when you’re “not feeling it”. Discipline is something you do even if you don’t feel motivated at that moment. Can devotion and love be something you do even when sometimes you aren’t feeling it in that moment?

Reflection question for you: what can you say you are devoted to?

Day 3:

Being Open to What Is

A Daily Practice takes some will and discipline to maintain, it is true. But go lightly, beloved.

There are so many things that we try to influence, control, or even force, as though our human will is the most important thing in our lives. If you are beginning this devotional practice in January, you might be on day 3 of a New Years Resolution right now. I’ve engaged with plenty of resolutions and intentions over my years, mostly all about shaping myself into a “better” version of me. Whether the intention is to get fit, stop being so cranky all the time, or learn a new skill this year, most often the daily push is both about the self and generates from within the self.

It makes me tired, frankly. I have deep wells of will to draw on, and I can be darn stubborn, but it still makes me tired. A wise faith leader once asked me how I access Spirit when I get tired, and if Spirit is with me in those times. I sat with that question, and realized this - Spirit, as I understand it, is Always with me. It is like the sun. Sometimes it may be hard to see or feel

because I've turned to look another way or I'm socked in with fog or clouds of worry, but Spirit is still there, shining upon me. Spirit does not judge or decide that I have to be worthy before I can be soaked in that unconditional love and acceptance that is how the universal spirit holds all of existence in regard.

Just get out of your own way. Pause and remove the filters and blinders and other tools (of whatever sensory method you use) that are keeping you focused on what you have chosen and what you think is important to you. Take out your ear buds and slip off your shoes, and arrive (metaphorically) naked on the sacred ground where you find yourself. Notice it, appreciate it, experience your interconnection with it. Not all of life is an exercise in Will. Flow with what is. Simply Be. Receive. Say Thank You.

Reflection Question: What do you notice right now if you pause and get out of your own way? What gifts of Being? What experience of Spirit or Love? What is flowing without you needing to push it?

Day 4:

Finding the Right Bite Size

Spiritual practices come in all sizes. Some of my most memorable spiritual experiences have come on a pilgrimage to historical religious sites in a country I don't live in, on hikes in the mountains, at multi-day retreats, and in worship services with huge choirs delivering sublime music. And none of those is the right size for my everyday life. Even if I could live like that everyday, logistically, I'm not sure it would be good for me spiritually either. A "peak" experience wouldn't be much of a peak if that was the altitude you lived in all the time. I treasure the ups and downs of our varied experience of life.

Finding the right size for your daily devotional practice may take some experimentation, but I recommend starting small. Currently, my daily devotional practice looks like this:

1. Sit comfortably in my reading chair, and light a candle that sits on the side table. I often also wrap myself up in a beloved quilt or afghan for coziness.
2. Open my music of the day book and then find that song online, using my phone and a small speaker, and play the piece of music. I listen quietly at first, and then move on to the next step when it feels right to me. I may just focus on the music for the whole piece, or not, often depending on how I am responding to the music.
3. Next I pick up my daily reader. This could be a book of poems. Currently I'm reading one entry a day from a book called *Present Moment, Wonderful Moment* by Thich Nhat Hanh.
4. I sit with the reading as long as I need to, and then I pick up my computer or my journal and I write. I'm writing this today as part of my daily devotional time, but I might as easily have needed to write a personal response in my journal that would not be for sharing.

5. When I'm done writing, I extinguish my candle and I am done. Total time for this practice varies but is between 15 and 30 minutes.

That is where my practice is now, but it might be too much for you to start with. Perhaps a single step appeals to you: play a piece of music and listen to it, or read a poem a day, or write in your journal. And of course, there are so many other ways to practice that are more active or more ritualistic, such as:

- Take a short daily walk outdoors
- Visit with something in nature, such as a tree, possibly sketching or taking a picture of it everyday as it goes through its cycles and seasons.
- Do a movement meditation
- Draw or do another creative medium each day.
- Create an altar and visit it each day for ritual or prayer
- Sing or chant or play an instrument for musical meditation
- Use an app or a podcast or some other recording and listen to a guided meditation

The list could go on, for there are so many ways to approach the divine. And while huge spiritual leaps may happen occasionally, I believe most journeys toward the divine are made up of small steps that are simply taken one after another.

Reflection Question: If your practice is going to fit into your life, how much time do you have to give? If it is only 5 minutes a day, what practice could you try for 5 minutes a day? If it is 30 minutes a day, what practice could you try for 30 minutes a day?

Day 5:

Noticing What You Are Bringing to Your Practice

While I mused on “getting out of your own way” on Day 3, there is also the practice of noticing what you are bringing and creating ways to release it or to fulfill it. We all cycle through different needs and feelings in our lives, and so what we need from our practice may change day to day. The “ACTS” model of prayer reflects this, reminding us that prayer can be:

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication

Or, in the words of author Anne Lammott, “Help, Thanks, Wow” and then I would add “Oops”. How can we recognize these needs and honor them and fulfill them in our daily practice? There's no one right way, of course.

One practice I have is what I call my Prayer Journal, which is different from my personal journal. I don't write about myself in my prayer journal, but instead I use it as a place to write and release my concerns and worries, most often for specific people I know but also in response to events such as natural disasters or ongoing crises in the world. I write my prayer there, and then put the prayer journal back on my altar. And through this practice I'm able to release the knots of worry and empathy that I would otherwise carry in my heart all day.

Other possible practices could include a "God Box" where you slip pieces of paper with all you feel you cannot carry by yourself written on them, or a daily drawing of a Tarot card for guidance and discernment, or hanging a gratitude leaf on a little tree on your altar, and so on and so on. And possibly you have multiple practices sitting there and ready for you, and each day you ask yourself what you need today: Help, Thanks, Wow, or Oops?

Reflection Questions: Do "Help, Thanks, Wow, Oops" work for you, or would you put other words on the feelings and needs you bring to your practice? What are the core aspects of being human that you bring to your spiritual life? How can you honor and fulfill these deeply human aspects of yourself?

Day 6:

Inviting Wisdom and Guidance

Today's ideas may not work for everyone, but many people find wisdom and guidance in various ancient and/or New Age practices that can be collectively categorized as Divination (horoscopes, tarot, etc). Here from Wikipedia is this definition of divination:

Divination (**from Latin *divinare*, 'to foresee, to foretell, to predict, to prophesy'**) is the attempt to gain insight into a question or situation by way of an occultic, standardized process or ritual.

The root of the word is also from the proto-Indo-European root word meaning "to shine".

But I'm curious about the fact that "to divine" (the verb) is to discover something or to know it, but "the divine" (noun or adjective) is the superb, the sublime, the holy, to be close to God. How does our seeking nature align with our most holy nature? How is seeking bringing us closer to the sublime? How is the possibility of finding wisdom from the patterns of the stars or of tea leaves or of dropped sticks a way of inviting in a wisdom greater than ourselves?

Now, I am still a fairly skeptical soul and I wouldn't put too much stock in any sort of future prediction or factual certainty from any of these systems of divination, but that doesn't mean they don't have a use as a form of spiritual practice. I think that when they are held lightly, as possibility and mystery, much can be gained by inviting some mystery and outside chance into your daily practice.

There are simply too many different ways you can begin a divination practice for me to possibly list them. I will just share my own. I have a set of Norse runes that my brother made for me when we were young teens, and I draw a rune a day and read from *A Little Bit of Runes* by Cassandra Eason. And I also have a tarot deck I've been using also since I was a young teen, and I draw one card a day. Currently I am enjoying the wisdom in *Tarot for Change: Using the Cards for Self-care, Acceptance, and Growth* by Jessica Dore.

Reflection Question: how do you most often seek wisdom? What other possible ways of seeking wisdom and guidance might bring something new and valuable to your practice? How do you “divine” as a verb?

Day 7

Sabbath Time

And on the 7th day God rested ... the wisdom of the sabbath is to create a day or a time that is different from the Everyday. Keeping the sabbath is a very important part of Jewish practice. Abraham Joshua Heschel, an important Jewish theologian and American rabbi of the 20th century, wrote this:

“The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.” – Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*

A Sabbath as a time set apart can be marked in many different ways. The weekly sabbath day, the annual Holy Day, the Sabbatical taken from work every 7 years, the Jubilee Year forgiving all debts, all are examples of sabbath time. In many ways, setting aside a daily time for your practice is creating a daily sabbath time. You pause, and you “turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation”.

I have had a mixed experience with creating a personal sabbath practice. While the practice of having an entire day for rest, for family, for spirit and reflection, and for the Holy is amazing, too often I simply can't manage a whole day without the tyranny of things intruding. I still try to create a sacred time, but I've had to adjust my expectations of when that will be. I now mark off one calendar day a month to block off for a spiritual practice (a hike or a reading retreat for instance) and then focus on maintaining my daily practice the rest of the time. The trick, I find, is simply to be intentional about your approach to time.

Reflection Questions: What “tyranny of things” do you live under? How do you become attuned to the holiness in time instead?

Day 8:

Know Yourself

What's your sign? Your Meyers-Briggs, your enneagram? If you were an icecream flavor, what flavor would you be? There are so many systems out there to classify and help you understand yourself, with a variety of quizzes that are either free or not and of variable quality. It can definitely get overwhelming, and no system of classifying people will ever truly capture the uniqueness and complexity that is you.

On the other hand, it's a tool, and while not perfect it's still a useful tool. When it comes to finding a spiritual practice, the tool that has been most useful to me is the Enneagram. The Enneagram classifies personality types based on our deepest motivations, strengths, and weaknesses. I was initially introduced to the enneagram as a tool for knowing how to work with others as a team, since knowing each other's strengths and weaknesses can help us anticipate how we can support and help one another.

But then, in spiritual direction, my director asked me if I'd heard of spiritual practices for my enneagram type. They had a list of suggested practices for each type, and when they read the suggestions for my type (Type 2 if ya'll are curious) it made so much sense and was counterintuitive at the same time. The spiritual practices suggested for me pulled me back and away from my natural knee jerk tendencies, and would therefore provide a counterweight and grounding in my life.

I've also read since then about another concept with the enneagram and spiritual practice, that we all have "downstream" and "upstream" practices. Downstream practices are ones that will come naturally to us and be reinforced by our tendencies. Upstream practices will be more challenging, and will stretch and balance us. An example: as a Type 2, it comes naturally to me to serve others, so a downstream practice is hospitality, volunteerism, or gratitude practices like thank you cards. Upstream practices are time alone, centering prayer, and anything that emphasizes being over doing.

Reflection Question: Consider finding out what your enneagram type is and doing some research on it. Or, just consider: what are your motivations, strengths, weaknesses, and tendencies? What practices feel like they are "downstream" practices for you, and what would be an "upstream" practice? Do you need more upstream in your life to give you balance?

Day 9:

Treat your senses

The Earth without Art would just be "eh". We are blessed to have many senses and ways to experience the universe around us, and oh what a rich and beautiful universe it is. While some

religious practices have emphasized the rejection of “pleasures”, many others have utilized the aesthetic to enhance the religious or spiritual experience. Beautiful architecture, stained glass art, music, incense, statuary, ecstatic dancing, it’s all part of bringing the senses into play.

Music became part of my practice this year because my mother gifted me last Christmas with a book called *Year of Wonder: Classical Music to Enjoy Day by Day* by Clemency Burton Hill. There is a little page of background and commentary on a piece of music for each day of the year. Knowing that my mother was also listening to these pieces, and how much classical music means to her, added a relational element to this practice as well, of course, but it has also been a sensory delight. I start my practice time in the morning by finding the piece on my chosen streaming service, and that sets the soundtrack for my practice time.

Now classical music may not be the element of beauty and sensory delight you want to bring to your practice, but I do encourage you to attend to your senses. What are you smelling? Would scented candles, incense, or essential oils add to your practice time? What are you hearing? Would music or an open window so you can hear the birds add to your practice time? What are you tasting? Is a cup of tea or coffee part of your practice? What are you seeing? What view have you provided yourself, and also what is the quality of the light? What are you feeling? What kind of seat, what temperature, do you have a cozy prayer shawl or a special cushion or mat? Do you hold something in your hands? What is your interior experience of your body, of the posture and state it is in? How do you arrange your body for your practice?

Reflection Questions: What are your sensory experiences and what is your sensory style? What aesthetic brings you closer to connection with yourself and with the Divine? How can you craft or be artful with your daily practices to attend to the aesthetic of the experience?

Day 10:

Being enfleshed

Someone once asked me whether I thought we were souls with bodies, or bodies with souls. An interesting question to argue about, I suppose, indicating what you think is the core and real *you* and what is the sidekick part. But this question betrays one of the tragedies of our western culture, in my opinion. From ancient times, philosophers and theologians and even scientists have promoted the idea of a separation between mind and matter, spirit and body, the holy and the physical. A duality thinking has us separating ourselves into parts, and then hierarchical thinking has us placing some of those parts above others.

We could take this further and reflect on how hetero-patriarchy, ableism, capitalistic exploitation of labor, and white supremacy thinking has also alienated some bodies from our understanding of the sacred. If you are a person who has lived with body-supremacy messages telling you that

your body is wrong or bad, you will be deeply affected by this. But we all are, to some extent or other.

So let's take a day to remind ourselves of how we are all enfleshed. I love the word, *enfleshed*, which means to be clothed in flesh, or to be made *real and manifest*. We are not a soul with a body - we are a spirit enfleshed. We cannot ignore the body, for it is the fact of the body that makes us real and manifest.

There are so many ways to honor your body as part of your practice. You could look to teachings of tantra and other forms that explore sacred sexuality and sexual energy. Or try ecstatic dancing. Or do a body scan meditation (there are tons of recorded body scan guided meditations out there you can use). Or just give yourself a little hug or self-massage. There's a right way for your body, a right way for you, and it may take a bit of experimentation to find it.

Reflection Question: what beliefs about your body do you carry, what messages have shaped you? How do you feel about the reality of being enfleshed?

Day 11:

Begin Again

OK, let's be real, after 10 days it seems very unlikely to me that you have stuck with this practice and done it daily without missing a day (or more!). There may have been a huge gap in time and you're not even sure it's worth coming back to this, no matter what your intentions were to begin with. But the most important thing is to simply begin. Again. And then again. And again.

No practice is ever going to be perfect. You are never going to be perfect. Life (and you) are messy and things fall apart at times. And when (not if) that happens, the way back is to begin again. Each time you begin, you commit anew to a path, a hope, a desire. Every movement along a path is a new beginning, a movement from where you are to where you aim to go. The choice to take a journey or to commit to a practice or a relationship or anything else isn't simply made once: it is made over and over and over again. So today, what do you choose? May you choose to renew your practice. May you begin again, and then again and again and again.

Reflection Question: How do you begin again? When have you practiced beginning again in the past? What do you learn from that practice?

Day 12:

Breathe

We are all united by the breath, with air circulating between the breathing ways of our plant friends and our animal relations, and all around the world that we share as one home. Even the breathing of those underwater will circulate and eventually join with the breathing of those of us who dwell on land. There is a reason that the ancient Greek word “Pneuma” is both “breath” and “spirit/soul”, and the Hebrew word “Ruach” means breath of God, as in the essence of God that sustains life. Breathing is holy and sacred.

The breath is also a basic that you can focus on when everything else is possibly just Too Much. People preparing to give birth are taught to breathe, and breathing with intent can settle our bodies, minds, and spirits in even the most difficult circumstances.

Bringing some breath work into your practice is easy. You could simply take a moment to pay attention to your breath, and to take a few deep and intentional breaths. Or there are more elaborate breath exercises, which you can find on various video recordings and free printables online or you can order breath exercise card decks and work your way through those exercises (the ones made for kids are still totally good for adults too!).

Just Breathe.

Reflection Question: How are you breathing right now? Try to ask yourself that question throughout your day. As you are working, as you are doing the dishes, how are you breathing? As you make that difficult phone call or deal with an angry toddler, how are you breathing?

Day 13:

Partners and Community

There is a proverb, (most often attributed as “African” but I am unsure of exact provenance) that says “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

While your personal spiritual and devotional practice is unique to you, it doesn’t have to be done all alone all the time. There are companions on the journey.

Communal worship and group spiritual practice are vital ingredients in our human wellbeing, for we evolved as beings of connection and community. Attending a worship service, a meditation or yoga class, joining a choir or a drumming circle, or even going out dancing are all incredible ways to bring community connections into your spiritual life.

Partners can also help, with friends and loved ones either doing a practice with you or just supporting and cheering for you as you do your practice. Maybe a friend would like to be an accountability buddy for spiritual practice, much like a gym buddy that helps you get your exercise goals in. And spending some time with therapists and spiritual directors and other wise

companions on the journey is also a helpful ingredient in the mix. Relationships of all kinds, and relationship work, are other important parts of the human journey to the divine.

Reflection Question: Who is with you on this journey? What community and relationships would you like to have on the journey? How can you cultivate connections with others as part of your process?

Day 14:

Connect with Nature

In our modern lives, it is easy for us to think we are separate from nature and in many ways we are separated from the daily experience of nature with all of our built spaces and artificial lights and temperature controls. Some new science indicates that human health is negatively affected by this lack of nature, and that we need to get our doses of Vitamin N (for Nature). Forest Bathing is one answer to this, to go into the woods for an intentional period of time for renewal and natural connection.

Of course, not everyone lives near true wilderness, or even near a nice city park. Not everyone has a backyard, and not everyone has the physical ability or time to hike out to some spectacular and isolated place. So how do we stay connected with nature? If you can, I really recommend going outside. Outdoors, even if it is just a sliver of garden or grass. Or find a tree to visit daily, even if it is caged on a city sidewalk. And sit still. Much of the natural world (the insects, birds, etc) avoids us humans and all our noisy activity. Sit still for long enough and you become part of the scenery and nature may come to you.

If you cannot get outside, bring a bit of nature to you. Even a houseplant, even a seasonal nature table, even a pet, brings the non-human into a relationship with you. If you use an altar in your practice or you have a meditation corner, is there any nature present in that space? If you sit in a comfy chair for your practice, does the chair look out a window or have a houseplant nearby or do you share it with a furry companion?

Remember, we humans evolved as part of nature. We need the non-human around us.

Reflection question: How do you get your “vitamin N”? Where is nature present in your practice? In your life?

Day 15:

Listen

We are living in a noisy world, one in which silence is actually considered an endangered thing. But how much do we hear when there is constant noise? If you are like me, and most people I

know, you have likely become skilled at tuning a lot of things out. And we need to, really, to retain our sanity. We need to tune a lot of it out, to teach ourselves not to take much note of it, to train ourselves into not-listening. Because listening is different from hearing. You may hear many things, without truly listening to them. Listening is an active process, a process that seeks to understand and to make meaning, or at least to truly experience what is present and is being shared.

This reminds me of a joke a friend told me once, that she had her husband go into the doctor's to get his hearing checked. The doctor reported that his hearing was just fine. To which my friend replied that this couldn't be so, since he didn't hear her all the time. The doctor's answer: hearing and listening are two different issues.

What are we hearing? And what are we listening to? As part of your practice, consider listening more. Listen to what is going on around you. What noises have you been hearing but have tuned out? And listen to the people around you. What have they been trying to say to you? And then listen to voices that you might be missing altogether, the voices of the marginalized and the voices of those very different from you. Seek out authors and speakers and teachers that are different, and listen to what they have to say. Try to listen to the non-human as well. What are the animals, the plants, and nature itself saying if you listen? What is spirit saying if you listen?

Reflection questions: what have you become skilled at tuning out? What do you hear and what do you listen to?

Day 16:

Holy Ground and Place

I love the story of God telling Moses to take off his shoes for he was on sacred ground. Moses was actually kind of out in the middle of nowhere, as I understand it, not in any known special place. Because all ground is sacred ground, really. While some places do feel particularly special and sacred, and going into a cathedral, a circle of standing rocks, or Yosemite valley may evoke feelings of sacredness and awe, any place can be sacred.

This means that the place where you are, right now, can be sacred. So take off your shoes (metaphorically) and plant yourself with full awareness in this place. Where are you standing/sitting/being right now? What lies under your feet? What has come here before you? Who was here before you? What was here before you or the structure you are inside (if you are inside one)? What was here before the road, the town, the name of this place? What grows here? What flows here? Sink your awareness deep into this sacred ground. Be present where you are.

Reflection Questions: How often do you feel yourself to be on sacred ground? What shifts for you when you practice remembering you rest on sacred ground?

Day 17:

Create and Express

Creativity and art can be a powerful practice, but I struggle with it and I know many others struggle too. While some of us may be comfortable and enjoy making art, I experience discomfort and criticism of what I create (and I know others feel this way too). When art becomes about product and not process, it's awfully easy to get critical and judgmental.

Here are two ideas to mull:

Anything worth doing is worth doing badly.

How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice, practice.

If art or music or any other form of expression is worth doing, it's worth doing "badly". And if you want to get better at anything, it takes practice. How interesting, that we talk about a spiritual practice, and also "practicing". So what artistic or creative forms might you practice as part of your practice? A daily sketch, an art journal, writing a poem a day? It may feel like a stretch, but remember this is just for you.

Reflection questions: how do you separate process from product? How do you feel about yourself as a creator or an artist? What can you continue doing even if "badly"?

Day 18:

Don't just do something - sit there

There are so many rich and juicy possibilities for activities to bring into a daily devotional practice, all being possible tools to bring you to that connection and heart centered love that is the goal of a devotional practice. But the flip side here is that you might be just loading yourself up with more busy-ness and assignments to be always Doing. It's really easy to do this, as our society reinforces the idea that doing something is important. We are busy. Or we are entertained. But when do we just sit?

The practice of just sitting is lifted up in the beautiful book *Rooted* by Lyanda Lynn Haupt as a way to connect with nature. She points out that the wild creatures of the world hear us coming and work to avoid us, but if we sit quietly and calmly, they will begin to treat us as part of the landscape and return. If you hike through the woods you will see and hear fewer birds than if you just sit quietly. So pick a spot outdoors and just sit. Become part of the landscape. Let it come to you rather than you trying to find it.

This can apply to other things besides wild creatures, too. What would come to us, what wisdom or wonder, if we sat and waited for it to appear rather than making ourselves busy doing things to find it? When does all the doing just become too noisy and drive wisdom away?

Reflection questions: what are you “just doing” and when are you sitting there? What has come to you in times when you sat?

Day 19:

Blessings

In the beautiful book *To Bless the Space Between Us*, John O’Donohue writes this about blessings:

Who has the power to bless? This question is not to be answered simply by the description of one’s institutional status or membership. But perhaps there are deeper questions hidden here: What do you bless with? Or where do you bless from? When you bless another, you first gather yourself; you reach below your surface mind and personality, down to the deeper source within you – namely, the soul. Blessing is from soul to soul. And the key to who you are is your soul.

It’s such a lovely description, isn’t it? And the process of offering a blessing feels equally lovely. For me, it begins with an image of the person, group, or whatever else I am going to bless, and image in my mind and in my heart. Then it’s almost as though I reach down to just scoop out some deeper love and care out of myself, which I can then offer to them in words. The format that works for me is to think:

(Blank), I see and love you in your (struggle/care/beauty/possibility/etc)

May you (something you wish for them, such as “be held in love” “have healing and care all around you” or “know you are not alone”, etc)

With these and also more that cannot be put into words, I offer you blessing.

Sometimes I write the blessing and send it in an email or a card. But sometimes who or what I want to bless isn’t known to me, such as “all the migrants on the border”. I might write that blessing in my prayer journal. Or I might just say it aloud and then let it float away. A soul to soul connection can be sent in many ways.

Reflection questions: When have you felt blessed? Have you tried to offer blessing? What gifts of your soul could be shared in this way?

Day 20:

Let's Move

You may be noticing a pattern now in these practice prompts, namely that one day I will say “get out of your own way” and then a few days later I will say “pay attention to what is within you that needs to be let go” or I will say “just sit” and then a few days later I will say “move your body”. There are a lot of contrasts at play in crafting a practice for yourself, which I believe is natural since we are multifaceted beings seeking connection in many directions at once, part of a complex web of relationship.

Part of our being is a body that is meant to move. We already reflected on day 10 about our enfleshed nature, and so you may have already tried to bring some body movement into your practice, but it's important enough to dedicate another day to it. There is a part of us that wants to move. A toe tapping, booty shaking, hands clapping, dancing with abandon, running with the wind, sliding down the slide, jumping into puddles, self.

Of course, our bodies all have their own capabilities, and they will change with time and age and circumstance. While swinging as high as I could on the park swings and then jumping off and attempting to go straight into a somersault was one of my favorite childhood ways to move my body, that ain't happening anymore in this middle aged body. It can be frustrating to want to move your body in a certain way and not be able to.

We also are just as judgy about moving our bodies as we are about the art that we make (remember day 17?). We say things like “I can't dance” when really we just mean “I think people who are viewing me are judging me to be a bad dancer”. To dance is just to move your body as a means of expression. You can dance, if you can move any part of your body in a way that helps you express yourself.

So dance like no one is watching! Move like you just enjoy being yourself.

Bringing this into your practice can be so easy: play a song that makes you want to move, and then just do. Of course, you can also try any number of more formal movement practices!

Reflection questions: what movement can your body do and how does it feel? What judgy thoughts are intruding on your just being a body in motion? How can you attend to those thoughts and then set them aside?

Day 21:

Make a chore into a practice

There are just some things that have to be done, some inescapable and sometimes unpleasant tasks that keep life flowing smoothly. These chores are many and varied, but let's take the example of washing the dishes. In my home and in other groups I've been part of, no one really wants to wash the dishes. Everyone has always loved it when someone else washed the dishes. But as we all use dishes all the time, they constantly need to be washed. And honestly the chore itself isn't that bad, it's just not super fun either.

So we could try to avoid the chore. Or we could hurry through it, rushing to be on to the next thing. Or we could do it angrily and full of resentment, why do I have to do this! Or we could try to distract ourselves and multitask - I'll listen to an audiobook while I do the dishes.

Or we can make the chore itself into a practice. An opportunity to connect. Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh had this to say about washing the dishes:

“If while washing dishes, we think only of the cup of tea that awaits us, thus hurrying to get the dishes out of the way as if they were a nuisance, then we are not “washing the dishes to wash the dishes.” What’s more, we are not alive during the time we are washing the dishes. In fact we are completely incapable of realizing the miracle of life while standing at the sink. If we can’t wash the dishes, the chances are we won’t be able to drink our tea either. While drinking the cup of tea, we will only be thinking of other things, barely aware of the cup in our hands. Thus we are sucked away into the future—and we are incapable of actually living one minute of life.”

So how can you be here, now, with these chores? What chore in your life could become a practice?

Reflection question: how do you approach washing the dishes (or another chore you have to do)? Are you “washing the dishes to wash the dishes” or are you treating them like a nuisance?

Day 22

Words and Names

In myth and legend, there are magical words that form spells when spoken. This is somewhat murky, but some say that the origin of the word “abracadabra” is from Hebrew and Aramaic roots and basically means “what is spoken is what becomes”. I wonder if this is also why Names matter so much - is what something is named an influence on what that something can become?

And another question: who has the power to name things and define words? So many things, from our place names to the names of plants and animals, have been named by colonizing European men. How does that change the possibilities of the world around us?

In our spiritual and devotional practices, the words we use can be powerful tools. Words shape how we describe our feelings, how we ask our existential wondering questions, and how we communicate our ideas. If we don't have words for these things, are they real and valid? And then how do the words we pick end up limiting us and the feelings, wonderings, and thoughts we can have?

Sometimes words can feed us. A mantra can be a very useful thing, whether it is a favorite Bible verse, a snippet of a poem, or any other string of words. I have many that I love. But we might also have words or names we carry that are limiting us or even causing us harm now. It might be time to let some of those words or names go.

Reflection questions: What words and names are part of your practice? Which do you find sources of spiritual strength and comfort and which might be limiting or harming you? What words and names would you like to let go?

Day 23

Perspective

There is a poster hanging in the youth room at my church that shows the milky way with one of those map arrows pointing to a spot that says “You Are Here”. I like to check in with that poster from time to time, particularly when I'm feeling that my focus is zoomed way in close on a bunch of minutia. We live amidst the details, “sweating the small stuff”, but we are also one person amongst billions on a planet hurtling through space amongst other celestial bodies also in motion, the after ripples of a cosmic explosion long long ago.

Sometimes, realizing our cosmic insignificance can feel sad and lonely. And other times, it's incredibly comforting. In the big picture, all shall be well. In the big picture, this too shall pass.

But if I keep my head down and my nose to the grindstone, I forget. So every now and then, I need to look up and gaze at the stars.

Reflection questions: what gives you a sense of cosmic perspective? How does that make you feel? When do you need that reminder?

Day 24

Perspective Part Two

I saw a video once that started on a view of a human eyeball, then zoomed in and in and in, going through the cellular, molecular, and all the way to the subatomic levels. Then it zoomed back out and kept going out from the eyeball all the way to the Universal. It was a beautiful representation of perspective taking.

Yesterday I asked you to look up and gaze at the stars, to take time for a bit of cosmic perspective. Today, let's give attention to the micro level. What incredible and rich life and wonder is busy and teeming away right below the level of our attention? Do we pause to notice and appreciate the cells of our own body? What about the entire ecosystem of bacteria that live on and inside of us, helping us function and thrive? Send some love to your gut bacteria today.

Or try picking up a rock or a fallen log and look at what is happening underneath it. A whole amazing process of life happens right below us. Imagine how that activity extends down into the soil below our feet - our planet is wrapped in a skin of living soil. Where do our daily human concerns fit into this deep reality?

Reflection Questions: when do you notice the small and the micro? What do you gain by taking a micro perspective? How does it make you feel?

Day 25: Savoring It

One of the things that I like about wine appreciation culture is the encouragement to go slow and really savor the sensations that a particular sip of a drink is giving you. To try

and taste the nuance of all that went into this wine, from how it was made to what the weather was like for the grapes and what the composition of the soil that the grapes grew in was. Yes, it can be a bit pretentious and there is plenty of elitism and other things to critique - but there is also this love of just Savoring something.

The act of Savoring is not just to consume, it is to appreciate and take pleasure in. It is to notice the sensations. This is a form of meditative and mindful engagement, and accessible to all of us not just to those who can afford expensive bottles of wine.

Whatever you are eating or drinking, do it slowly. Try to appreciate all the subtle flavors and textures. Think about what went into this food or drink - the soil, the weather, the plant, the people, the process.

Or try and savor something else. Sit and watch a sunset. Notice the nuance of color and cloud. Think about all that is going into this sunset: the sun, the air quality, the weather patterns, the spinning planet we sit upon.

Savoring can be done almost anytime and anywhere. You can even do it with unpleasant sensations and things - if you like. It is an attitude to bring to life, not another item to place on your To Do list.

**Reflection Questions: when are you savoring and when are you consuming?
What do you miss when you don't take time to savor?**

Day 26: Make an Offering

It seems like humans have always felt called to offer something to the divine. A sacrifice or offering has taken many forms, from a bit of drink poured out onto the earth to the calculated tithe of wealth and income given to the church, to the bloody and awful sacrifices of old myth, legend, and scripture.

In my thinking, the Divine may or may not be touched by these acts of offering, but the ones who make the offering definitely are. As with prayer, the act of giving an offering changes us, orients us outward and opens our hearts to others and to the larger divine we are devoted to. It brings us closer to the holy, whatever that is for each of us.

Where do you make an offering? Do you pledge or give to your spiritual or religious community? Buy something for the food bank each time you shop for your family? Do you soulfully fill a birdfeeder or water a plant? There are opportunities to give all around us, where does your heart and soul call you to place your treasure?

Reflection questions: What practices of making an offering do you already do? Where do you feel called to make an offering? How does giving affect you? What are you reoriented toward when you give?

Day 27: Asking for Help

I find it really hard to admit when I need help, or to ask for help. Why is it so hard? Is it conditioning from growing up in this individualistic “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” culture? Yes. And it’s because I’m an oldest child. And because I’m a 2 on the Enneagram. And because I’m a woman. And because I have ego investment in being “the strong one”. All of these things are true, and maybe some of this resonates for you too.

But humans are relational beings, we aren’t meant to do it all ourselves. And asking for help, whether from another person or from the collective or from the divine, creates an opportunity for others to practice generosity and kindness. Needing help gives others a gift - a chance to be loving and caring.

So ask for something. Or say yes when something is offered. Make this part of your practice, to receive as well as to give.

Reflection questions: Do you have any blocks to asking for help? What feelings come up for you when you do need help? How can you remember your relational mutuality? How is your need a gift to others?

Day 28: We Give Thanks

Gratitude is a powerful emotion and a powerful practice. It is another practice that can change both the one who is appreciated and the one who is appreciating. I’m fascinated by the relationship research that has shown that a relationship improves if either person begins a gratitude practice, focusing on what they appreciate about the other person - *even if they keep this practice private and don’t tell the other person*. Saying thank you in our hearts and minds may bring us closer to something or someone, even if we don’t publicly declare our gratitude.

Daily practices of gratitude abound, such as a gratitude journal. Taking the time to notice what we are grateful for is a foundational spiritual act.

Reflection questions: How do you notice your gratitude and appreciation? How does the act of appreciation change you and your relationship with what you appreciate?

Day 29: What Needs to Shift?

If you've been following along now you've had 28 explorations about your daily practices and your spiritual life. This is the end now, and I wonder what you've noticed during this journey? What might need to shift in your practice, going forward? What have you noticed about:

- The time you take? Your relationship to time?
- Your relationship to space, to nature, your body, your senses, and your thoughts and feelings?
- What comes naturally to you and what is a stretch? What unpacking and healing work is yours?
- What is your relationship with others and where are your companions for this journey?
- When do you need a perspective shift, and what helps you get that perspective?
- What is within you that needs to be expressed and/or released?
- What comes to you if you find ways to listen, receive, and be open?

Going forward, what is your next step on your journey to wholeness and the divine?

Day 30: Celebrate!

You did it! 30 Days of Spiritual Practice - something to be proud of, no matter how you got here. Remember to take time to celebrate along any journey, including the spiritual one.

For me, celebrations like this could look like a self-congratulatory social media post, or a little bit of joy and celebration (like a homemade sign that says "30 Days Accomplished!") placed on my altar. It doesn't have to be big, but acts of celebration are little milestones placed along the long road of a lifelong practice in becoming.

Reflection question: How can you celebrate today?

Day 31: Bonus Day - Reflect

Think back over this month. If you have been journaling, read your entries. What do you see in this reflection? What happened this month? Who were you during this month?

What wisdom was present? What challenges were faced? What was learned? What seeds were planted for later? Just reflect. Just let yourself take it in, as it was.

Thank you

Thank you for taking this journey with me. I hope some of these ramblings and meanderings through my thoughts on spiritual practice have been of use to you. This is a gift I felt called to offer. May it be a blessing to the world. Thank you for receiving my gift. May the gift be a blessing to you.