

Covid Musing – August 5, 2020 – 17 Spiritual Truths NSMC – Dan Graber

We have looked at a variety of covid related issues – mental health, economics, justice, and different angles on the coronavirus. Here is another musing that is more personal and spiritual related. It's from a quarterly Mennonite resource that we get preaching ideas from as well as a variety of articles. Enjoy and cogitate!

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Real spiritual growth begins with carefully naming what is true and what isn't.
Use these life lessons prompted by COVID-19 to deepen your spiritual moorings.

Seventeen spiritual truths from COVID-19

Reaching out to spiritual but-not-religious skeptics

Fred Longenecker

Religion, church, and the Bible often get nowhere with today's skeptics. While persons who identify as "spiritual but not religious" (also known as SBNR) have learned to distrust almost everything around them, they often still believe in their inner world and their experiences. This list of 17 truths encourages a careful consideration of one's inner world and an examination of one's core identity apart from ego, thoughts, and emotions—in other words, to help spark an acceptance and experience of faith *from the inside out*.

These 17 truths speak to the high emotions of dealing with the coronavirus while introducing the indwelling Holy Spirit as a first experience of a living faith that is not primarily about books, the Bible, buildings, religion, or structure of any kind.

01 We're not in control. Instead, the coronavirus seems to be. Realizing that we aren't in control is an important first step in spiritual growth. While we'd like to imagine otherwise, we first need to realize we *never were* in control. *Absolute control is an illusion.*

02 We can't fix it. Nobody can. Instead, we muddle on. That's real life. Fixing everything to perfection isn't real. If we're honest, life is *always* messy. *Perfection is an illusion.*

03 We need to slow down. Our spiritual growth depends on our *awareness* of life—not blazing through it. What would happen if we all paused and silently did absolutely nothing for 30 minutes each day? *Racing through life to find satisfaction is an illusion.*

04 We need to trust. As we wait for the virus to pass, we are like children waiting for permission to resume our lives. We are being forced to trust that life will return to something more normal, though we have no certainty of when or how. This reminds us that *certainty is an illusion.*

05 We aren't what we do. Have you been tying your self-worth to outward accomplishments? That is risky, because you will almost certainly crash someday—or maybe you already have during the pandemic. *Basing our self-worth on achievements is an illusion.*

06 We aren't what we have. Have you been comparing what you have to others, and judging your self-worth based on your possessions? That is risky, too, because someone else always has more than you do. The pursuit of "more" is endless. *Basing our self-worth on possessions or comparisons is an illusion.*

07 We aren't what other people say we are. When we are moving through life, with or without a crisis like COVID-19, whose voices are we listening to when we judge our self-worth? Whoever it is, the voices need to be turned off. *Basing our self-worth on what other people say about us is an illusion.*

08 How we define productivity is wrong sometimes. When we move through life too fast, we can find ourselves paddling "like mad" *but in the wrong direction*. In fact, it has always been true that our efforts are most productive when we pause long enough from the action to understand what is happening. *Realizing that our own view of productivity is sometimes an illusion can be a helpful step toward a dependable spiritual connection.*

09 Look for something bigger. Is the physical world all there is? No! Keep working to find your spiritual connection. It is real. You'll experience it if you keep looking. *Searching for more depth is a vital step toward a dependable spiritual connection.*

10 Look inside yourself. It is *not* selfish to look inside yourself for strength. Believe it or not, you'll find treasure there! Don't miss your beauty, your tremendous selfworth, and your closest-ever spiritual connection. *Looking inside yourself is a helpful step toward a dependable spiritual connection anytime and especially during the pandemic.*

11 We aren't empty inside. We can *feel* empty inside, but the truth is we are not. At the core of our being is the *essence of life*, what some call the Inner Guide, Inner Teacher, Holy Spirit, or Higher Mind. *Finding our essence inside is a vital step toward a dependable spiritual connection.*

12 We aren't our emotions and thoughts. Feelings and thoughts, including emptiness and fear, can *feel* real, but they will always pass by, leaving behind what is real. Many people first learn this through meditation. *Exploring our true inner being is a helpful step toward a dependable spiritual connection.*

13 We aren't our ego. Like our thoughts and feelings, believing that our ego is *us* is an easy mistake. But it isn't. Instead, the ego is the part of us that worries about our survival by increasing our fears of dying, running out of money, and so forth. When you learn to depend on your true *essence*, you gain the ability to "talk back" to your ego and its unhelpful messages. *Rejecting your ego's false messages is a vital step toward a dependable spiritual connection.*

14 Silence isn't scary. We can *fear* silence, but there is nothing unnatural about it. Much of nature is silent. Maybe start with just 10 minutes each day? *Learning to become comfortable with silence is a helpful step toward a dependable spiritual connection anytime and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.*

15 We need each other. The virus has shown us the importance of social contact. Cooperation is essential, locally and globally. *Recognizing our interdependence is a helpful step toward a dependable spiritual connection.*

16 Everyone matters. No one can be left behind if we are truly a fair and just society, yet COVID-19 has exposed social “potholes” that have left many living in dire straits. While a flurry of support has emerged (let’s build on this!), we also need new economic policies and stricter limits on corporate greed. *Providing enough for all is a vital part of a dependable spiritual connection.*

17 The planet matters. Our old way of living was harming the planet. We’ve been cutting off our life supply. With the slowdown, we see signs of how the planet could slowly recover. This restores hope and is a spiritual breakthrough. *Restoring the planet is a vital part of a dependable spiritual connection.*

Finding a dependable spiritual connection is important.

Without it, we may struggle *even more* when life throws a curve like COVID-19.

This inner work is much easier for pastors and leaders to learn to do for themselves and with others using a comprehensive newer psychotherapy (and self-therapy) that encompasses the older family systems theory. This fun, new approach is called internal family systems (IFS).

(I would argue that it’s not easier for pastor and leaders! Self work is always tough!)

It has been developed for secular settings by Richard Schwartz and has been adapted by Christian IFS therapists. This therapy is getting amazing results with a range of mental health conditions, from generalized anxiety to post-traumatic stress disorder. One resource is *Parts Work: An Illustrated Guide to Your Inner Life* by Tom Holmes. The final section of the book includes illustrations of Christian applications.

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