



CHASING JUSTICE

Audacity to Thrive

RISING INTO 2022



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INTRO



Audacity to Thrive is to rise: flourish: prosper: expand: grow: develop: progress. It is to realize a goal despite or because of circumstances.

Many of us are still dizzy from the past two years. Trying to find our footing in a world that still hasn't adjusted after a racial, social, and spiritual reckoning can be disorienting and painful work. The noise from countless voices and opinions is deafening. This is when we need to focus on our individual soul care the most. We need to make sure that we are intentionally creating space to grow, prevail, and flourish. Our deep ancestral longing to flourish must not go ignored! It must be cultivated and cared for to fearlessly blossom like a flower pushing through the concrete.

We haven't stopped dreaming. We haven't stopped celebrating. Our joy is still inherently in us and it's time to make sure we live it out. We are here not just to survive but to show the world that the Lord has given us a daring audacity to thrive!

To move ahead, we will be taking a look back. American Western values are oriented towards the present and future, but most indigenous and majority world cultures build toward the future with the past in mind. As you enter in the new year, we invite you to:

- › Celebrate the good things that we have accomplished, the things we learned, the connection we made with others.
- › Express our gratitude to God and others.
- › Lament what we are closing and consider what we are leaving.
- › Prepare to enter into the new stage with God's guidance.
- › Receive God's healing and renewal.
- › Accept God's permission to flourish as a life-style.

As you go through this guide, feel free to create a low tech space that best helps you engage. Consider a blanket, candles/oil diffuser, a holding prayer cross, great pens, journal, inspiring music, candy, or a watch. We will provide reflections, guidance, and a PDF guide personal process.

RESTORE

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black jumpsuit, stands in profile on a mountain peak, looking upwards towards a cloudy sky. The background shows a vast, hazy mountain landscape with a winding river or path visible in the distance.

**"In the stillness
of the quiet, if
we listen, we can
hear the whisper
of the heart
giving strength
to weakness,
courage to fear,
hope to despair."**

(Howard Thurman)

We are embodied spiritual beings, therefore there is no separate line item for “spirituality”. Everything we do is spiritual. Soul Care is the intentional practice of integrating all aspects of the human experience: physical, relational, emotional, vocational, etc. However, oftentimes we’re moving so fast, or are so connected to noise and activity, that we neglect to care for our very souls. We miss the One who longs to sustain and restore us to the core of our being.

Some of us are afraid of the stillness and silence, uncertain of who or what we are without the barrier of noise we’ve curated for ourselves-- the noise of what we have, what we do, or what others say about us. For others of us, silence has been a place of oppression-- we’ve been silenced or have perpetuated injustice with our silence. Or maybe we’ve just never known a world where silence is an option.

“Be still and know that I am God.”

-Psalm 46:10

We are invited to reclaim our rest as good, holy, and necessary. We reclaim our rest by opening our souls up to God’s presence regularly and intentionally. We allow God to tend to our

wounds, our weariness, our exhaustion, to speak truth into our circumstances. In rest, we reorient ourselves as people of justice, mercy, and hope. In accepting God's invitation for rest, we embrace the opportunity to become whole.

"In the stillness of the quiet, if we listen, we can hear the whisper of the heart giving strength to weakness, courage to fear, hope to despair."
(Howard Thurman)

Practice

Let yourself rest for a few minutes with no agenda. Listen for the silence and stillness that is present between your thoughts. In this attentive place, you'll begin to notice how your body feels.

- Breathe for five minutes. Set a timer, close your eyes, and just breathe.
- Slowly breathe in and out a few more times. This time with intention. Exhale your exhaustion, confusion, grief and fear. Inhale God's tender love, grace and peace. Inhale: Be still my soul. Exhale: I am restored.
- We are embodied creation bearing God's image. Thank God for this body given to you.
- Write down your reflections and allow God to tend to your soul.



REFLECT



Reflection is critical to our growth and maturity, especially as activists. In this section, you'll be taking some time to reflect on how your social, community, family values, and personal realities from the past year have impacted you. Reflection leads us to integrity—beyond the words that we speak, we ask real questions about how we live.

“Discernment, in a most general sense, is the capacity to recognize and respond to the presence and the activity of God—both in the ordinary moments and in the larger decisions of our lives.” (Ruth Haley Barton)

In life, we experience valleys and mountaintops in relationships, vocational choices, finances, etc. However, our societal pulse towards triumphalism tempts us to value our successes and “wins” over our failures. Integrated leaders see that our failures, missteps, and “losses,” are amongst our greatest teachers. As followers of God, we look to the Psalmists who give us a vision for both lament and celebration—both grief and gratitude.



Practice

Scan the last year. Take note of significant events, changes, interactions with people, issues you were wrestling with, even small things that may come to mind that brought you great joy, or great sadness, or worry. Look back on your calendar or planner to remind yourself of what happened. Remember to think about the different spheres of your life: your relationships, school, work, friendships, church, sports, hobbies, ministries, etc. Have fun with your list.

Now go deeper. Ignatian spirituality teaches us to pay attention to the Consolation and Desolation in our inner lives. These terms refer to the felt presence of God in our soul (*consolation*), or the absence of that feeling (*desolation*). As you look back on your year, make a simple list of consolations and desolations.

Consolation

Prayer: *God, help me to notice where you have been and where I have been. May my heart be filled with joy and gratitude as I see where you have been present with me.*

- › *When was I most aware of God's presence?*
- › *What caused me an increase in faith, hope, and love?*
- › *What was most life-giving?*
- › *When did I have the greatest sense of belonging?*
- › *When was I most free and creative?*
- › *When did I feel most fully myself?*

Desolation

Prayer: *God, help me to notice where you have been and where I have been. May my heart be free to lament the pain and be comforted by your presence in pain.*

- › *When did I feel God's absence?*
- › *When did I feel unable to love well or be loved?*
- › *Where did I lack faith and hope?*
- › *What was draining?*
- › *Where were the moments I felt trapped or fragmented?*
- › *When did I feel least myself?*



REORIENT



The process of formation follows the pattern of Orientation, Disorientation, and Reorientation, as explained by Walter Brueggemann in *Spirituality of the Psalms*. Having a crisis of faith or realizing that we are not living the way of Jesus perfectly is expected. We are simply on the journey to being formed into Christlikeness.

- Orientation: a place in which everything makes sense in our lives.
- Disorientation: a place in which we feel we have sunk into the pit.
- Reorientation: a place in which we realize God has lifted us out of the pit and we are in a new place full of gratitude and awareness about our lives and our God.

Practice

In this section, we invite you to assess what current season/movement listed above you find yourself in your life with God. After you've identified your season/movement, begin to think through the values that are central to you. Reflect on how you might reorder specific areas of your life to reflect a love for God and a love for neighbors. Reordering allows us to practice faith and justice and rebuild a just world.



As you review your year, allow your thoughts to wander through the situations you've been in and allow God to speak, challenge, encourage, and teach you.

- What habits or life patterns do I notice in my year that I want to keep?
- What needs to change in order to be aligned with my values around racial, economic, political, and global justice?
- Write a list of the people around you that you see living faithful lives. Write out what you admire about them, what you'd like to ask them, and what you'd like to implement from their example.
- Consider your spending and budget last year. How does it reflect your values, and what adjustments will you make?

RISE



As you've taken these last few sections to contemplatively restore your soul, reflect on the year, reorient your vision, and take some time now to rise into 2022.

“Spiritual formation prepares us for a life in which we move away from our fears, compulsions, resentments, and sorrows, to serve with joy and courage in the world, even when this leads us to places we would rather not go. Spiritual formation helps us to see the face of God in the midst of a hardened world and in our own heart. This freedom helps us to use our skills and our very lives to make that face visible to all who live in bondage and fear. As Jesus told his disciples: ‘So, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed’ (John 8:36).” (Henri Nouwen)

“All contemplation should be followed by action; they are there for one another. The reason to contemplate anything would be to have clarity about what action to take next.” (Therese Taylor-Stinson)

Practice

Take some time to journal the following prompts:

- What longings for the future remain with you after your process?
- Is there something the Spirit may be asking you to release and let go? Is there something the Spirit may be inviting you to hold onto or embrace?
- Is there a phrase or an image that represents what you'd like to bring with you moving forward? Write it down and keep this word, phrase, or image in your heart.
- Take some time to write out a genuine prayer on your reflections from 2021 and your hopes for your 2022.

➤ **Sample Prayer:** *God, give me the grace to move into this new year with love, faith, and hope. Give me the grace to lean into more of what brings me life. Give me faith to recognize you in the everyday of life. Give me the audacity to thrive for the sake of my community and for your glory. Amen.*

Thank you for allowing us to provide a process to restore your soul, reflect on your year, reorient your vision, and rise into 2022. May we all have the audacity to thrive.



APPENDIX



Additional Restore Practices

- Reflect: Take some time to read one of the following Psalms (63, 27, 118). Read through the passage slowly all the way through. What phrase or image catches your attention? Write the portions of scripture in your journal that engage your spiritual or theological imagination. Draw or write in response to what the Word is doing in your heart and mind.
- Slow down: Notice whatever God's Spirit in you draws your attention to-- in your thoughts, in your heart, in the natural world around you. Converse with God about what you notice. Listen. Journal what goes on.
- Take a nap: As part of your trusting in God, feel the freedom to rest or sleep. Practice this as an intentional act of trust, committing yourself, body and soul, to God's care and awakening, refreshed and more attentive, with thanksgiving for God's continuing presence.
 - "Rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against capitalism and white supremacy. We must deconstruct around the ways we uphold grind culture, capitalism and white supremacy. To imagine a New World that centers liberation, we must practice rest as our foundation to invent, restore, imagine, and build." – Nap Ministry, Tricia Hersey



- Listen in Silence
 - Silence reminds us we are on a journey. In those moments, we are able to see the length of the journey and pay attention to patterns.
 - Silence gives us the space to notice the passion within us. We are connected and attentive to the source of our life.
 - Silence instructs us on how to speak by discerning what is for us to hear and what is for us to say. Silence requires strength, but only in silence can we slow ourselves down enough to truly hear.
 - Sometimes doing something tactile or holding an object helps us hold silence. It may help to light a candle, play with Play-Doh, hold a prayer cross, or take a walk.

Additional Reflect Practices

- Relationship Check-In. Good community is key to living a life of faith and justice.
 - Make a list of relationships that are important to you. Although we may have many acquaintances on social media, a multitude of brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, and dozens of acquaintances in our city, we can only maintain so many relationships. The practice of discerning which relationships are central to you is difficult but important. You will start to

see how the list adds up. Here are some categories that might help:

- » Connections for life: Partner, children, parents, extended family, and extended family (BIPOC reality), Covenant friendships
 - » Current relationships: Friends, Mentorships, Neighbors, Cohorts (ethnic affinity, seminary, leadership)
- There are limitations to the amount of time we are able to spend with each person in our lives. Without judging yourself, begin to mark how connected you have been to the individuals you listed above. Note how often you called, visited, or prayed for them. As you make these evaluations, these reflections will help you to determine the difference between your intent and your actual activity. Make space here to also identify cultural values that were at play in your decision and your laments. Identify any cross cultural realities that were in tension with one another.



Additional Reorient Practices

- Return to your list of relationships. With a new color, mark some goals for the relationships you want to prioritize. Beyond your family, select less than a dozen relationships in which the Holy Spirit is inviting you to invest in. If you prefer not to name specific individuals, write out the weekly or monthly communal spaces you are committing to. If you are married, additional reflection questions are noted in the Appendix.
- Grief Ritual: Light four candles and name four things you need to lament from the year. One by one, blow out the candles. Light the same four candles, and name four things that brought you joy and gratitude (adapted from Kaitin Curtice).
- Examen: A process that raises awareness in our own hearts of how God has moved.
 - What experiences were life-giving? What am I most grateful for? Spend time thanking God for those experiences.
 - What experiences were life-denying? What am I still confused about, have pain over or have questions about? In the light of God's love, what would you like to say to God about that time, event, experience?



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