

“A Living Gospel: Reading God’s Story in Holy Lives”

Featuring Robert Ellsberg

A Week of Reflection | Session 5: A Living Gospel in our Stories

Day 1:

“We do not in the moment realize that God is there in our doubts, in the exam we failed, in the frustration of our heart’s desire, in the loss of our friend. Sometimes there is an unmistakable sign of grace, a gesture, the unmistakable voice that causes us to exclaim, like the disciples: It is the Lord! But usually it is only when we look back that we can see this, the door that opened for us, just as another one closed.” - Robert Ellsberg

Consider some of your biggest disappointments. Have you come to understand God’s presence through those experiences? Have you noticed God leading you through difficult times?

Day 2:

Henri Nouwen prayed, “I do not know where you will lead me. I do not know where I will be two, five, or ten years from now. I do not know the road ahead of me, but I know now that you are with me to guide me and that, wherever you lead me, even where I would rather not go, you will bring me closer to my true home.”

In the midst of uncertainty, Henri came to a place of deep peace and faith. Is this a prayer that you can pray with your whole heart? What makes it difficult to let go and live in uncertainty? How might you bring this to God?

Day 3:

Robert Ellsberg: ***"It was that hope, planted in the heart of the saints, rather than any handbook or manual of instructions, that was their compass, leading them to their true home. And it was on that path that they encountered God."***

What helps you to practice hopefulness? What things contribute to such hope? What things detract? How will you bring this before God?

Day 4:

Sister Wendy Beckett: ***"Life's journey has unexpected twists and turns. We don't plot the journey, but we can respond to it as our Lord wants at every new surprise. It's allowing Him to be alive in us that matters, not what seems to be happening, but what He knows is happening."***

How have you cultivated 'allowing God to be alive' within you? When life becomes difficult, how have you been able to nurture spiritual practices that connect you to knowing that 'God knows what is happening'? How will you bring this before God?



Day 5:

Speaking of Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen, Sister Wendy said, ***“There is much self-deception and muddle in their lives; and yet there is an unwavering concentration on God. I think many people would find this very encouraging that it’s the direction that matters, the desire, and not the spiritual achievement as it were.”***

Many of us struggle with imposter syndrome. We want to deepen our spiritual lives but often get distracted by our shortcomings. How do you experience the affirmation that what matters is the direction, the desire ... not the achievement? How do you nurture your desire for God?

Day 6:

“If I look back on my life and wonder, where was God in this story? I can easily look at the great encounters, the opportunities, the doors that seemed to open, just when I most needed them. But I have no doubt, as I look back, that God was also present in the times of failure, brokenness, and doubt. Perhaps a journey faith involves learning to trust in “the possibility of new life and healing” even in the times when all seems dark and uncertain.” - Robert Ellsberg

Your life story contains a living gospel. What will you carry with you from this series to keep you attentive to God’s presence in your story: past, present, and future? As you reflect on God’s presence in your life, where do you see growth? Where do you hope to grow? How will you bring that before God?
