

Invitation to a Great Experiment

WARNING: Come Only If You Want To Live Differently!

We've never had so many queries about a *Bread of Life* offering. The warning tag came in the description of the "Journey to Freedom" class currently underway where we are exploring the "Good News" about time, money and relationship. People wanted to know exactly what participation would require. Their question echoes the one asked of the prophet Micah 2700 years ago: Does faithfulness to God require extraordinary sacrifice, like thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil? Does it require sacrificing a firstborn child?

Micah's response was clear. While the ego or the gods of culture may require the heroic and extraordinary, what God requires is simple, loving, and ordinary *practice*, which ultimately up-ends the world: "**What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?**" (Micah 6:8).

The methodology is **practice** – *doing* and *loving* and *walking* are primary means of living the realm of God here and now. Jesus said over and over, "The kingdom of God is at hand!" and he lived an extraordinarily free life based in that truth. Practice first confronts us with our fears, resistances and places of bondage, and then opens the door to freedom from the very things that enslave us. Practice is about "acting our way into better thinking, rather than trying to think our way into better acting." It's about incarnation where there is a growing congruence between inner and outer life and both reflect the desire of God's heart for the individual person and for the world.

Commitment and community are two key elements of the process. Our own blinders and the inexorable pull of culture is so strong that none of us can engage the work of faithful living alone. Participation in a faith community of itself is not enough, however. The community too must be committed to practice in life, and to developing ways of holding itself and its individual members in loving accountability.

In terms of the class, it's as simple as asking each person present to experiment each week with a life practice in one of the 3 areas under study. The experiment selected flows out of the intersection of scripture, prayer and the person's sense of some aspect of his/her life that is invited to conversion. For example, claiming Sabbath time away from the drives and demands of the calendar was paramount for many in our group. One woman chose to remove her watch for a week. Another experimented with time dedicated to "play" everyday and realized she doesn't know what "play" is. Another decided to try an hour during the week of "doing nothing" but being in the presence of God. The intention is announced to the community each week, and each person is specifically prayed for during the week by another member of the group. When we reconvene we share what we've learned about ourselves, about God, and about the invitation to full life.

At *Bread of Life* we are actively exploring what it means to become a community of practice. **The first discovery is that we have many more choices available than most of us believe;** it's just that the choices feel daunting. Young Gandhi, when first arrested for the "crime" of civil disobedience, was led before a judge who apologized for the sentence he was about to mete out. "I'm sorry," the judge said, "but the law is clear. I have no choice." "You do have a choice," retorted Gandhi. "You can quit your job." It sounds like the kind of choice Jesus offered: "*Come, follow me.*" Leave behind your notions of what you can and can't do, of what is and isn't realistic, and simply begin the

walk in the company of other imperfect, committed followers. Commit to one specific practice this week to align your life more closely with the desire of God's heart for you. Share your experiment with another person and covenant to uphold one another in prayer. Be gentle and courageous. Let us join one another in living the radical freedom of the Good News.

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