

Living as Wholeness



Living Out Loud – Study Guide

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2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Month: December, Week 1

Monthly Theme: Living as Wholeness

Weekly Topic Title: Embracing Wholeness

Marketing Teaser:

There is a spark of pure Life – wholeness – within us all. Within you. We're going to touch it this week and learn how to let it be the reference point for what we do in the world, for how we live our lives.

A One Sentence Affirmation:

I am made in the image of the Divine, living a whole life.

Monthly Theme Summary:

Ernest Holmes said, "The spark which burns at the center of our own soul is caught from the living and eternal flame of Spirit." (*SOM 414.3*) Our charge, then, is to recognize, nurture, and express this Divine spark of wholeness. We kindle this flame by living from our own Divine Center, recognizing it in others, working for it in our community and in the world, and looking to great way-showers to inspire and guide us. In this, the Universe knows us as whole.

Summary of Today's Topic:

We are naturally, irresistibly drawn to wholeness. There is something within us that yearns to discover that which makes us whole, to realize the peace and joy that we inherently know is ours by Divine birthright. God wants us to embrace our wholeness, and the key to living wholly is in the realm of "consciousness." A life of wholeness flows through our experience only because it first flows through our consciousness, and spiritual consciousness is attained through practicing Truth.

Suggested Science of Mind Point of View:

No matter the troubles we face, we always have infinite opportunities to see them rightly and to experience a healing. By our place in Spirit's heart, and by the power of our beliefs, we can invite the perfect love of God to bring us to a place of wholeness.

Study Guide Instructions:

This is a self-paced study guide. Use it to complement your daily (or weekly) spiritual practice. Notice what you notice, and reflect on why that insight, observation, or question came to mind. Use the journal (note) page to write down your observations.

Three Discussion Points that Illustrate this Point of View:

1. The master teacher Jesus advised that we seek the Kingdom of wholeness first, then the things of this world will be added to our lives. Our New Thought approach to seeking the Kingdom is to utilize the spiritual practices of prayer, meditation, visioning, and speaking affirmations. Other practices include gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion. In utilizing these tools and practices, we are steeping our minds and hearts in unity consciousness

2. While seeking the sacred dimension of life first is sound spiritual guidance, we know that Spirit provided us tools for living an elegant life. God not only fashioned us after its own image and placed us in the garden, it gave us dominion over life. We acknowledge that controlling our conditions is not our highest spiritual calling, but exercising our dominion can help remove the distractions of disappointment, failure, or feeling less-than. Werner Erhard said, "The conditions for transformation are not present when people are hungry." So, we take charge of our life, practice dominion, and clear the circuits of our consciousness in order to make ourselves ready to experience wholeness.

3. Our sense of wholeness often has to do with our expectations, and our expectations have to do with our desires. On the deepest level, our desires are actually our yearning to

experience the qualities of God in our lives. We inherently know that, deep within us, is pure wholeness and we want to feel that. Joseph Campbell said we all want to feel the "rapture of being alive." Sometimes, we try to experience this "rapture" through a relationship with someone else. Hence, we have expectations and, when they are not met, we feel incomplete. It feels like disappointment and anger. But the more aware we are of the expectation behind the anger, the healthier the emotion is in our life and the better chance we have of learning from it, blessing it, and releasing it.

Conclusion and Call to Action:

It is Spirit's great desire to give us the Kingdom, to give us a life of wholeness. We were created in the full expression of the Life and power that created the Universe, and we have been given the depth of heart and the tools to elevate our awareness to the level of a whole life. Our charge is to do the work. We are to cultivate the perception of Oneness through our prayers and meditation; to exercise dominion by living mindfully; and to look at our expectations, understanding what we are truly seeking.

Three Supporting Quotes from Science of Mind/New Thought Literature with publication title and page number:

1. "You are a perfect idea in Infinite Mind. You are whole now. This wholeness is the only way the Universe

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

knows you.” – Eric Butterworth, *The Creative Life*, p. 24

2. “Every (person) represents an individualization of universal Wholeness; the love, peace, joy, and freedom of Spirit. The Power of the Spirit expresses through every atom of our being now, this moment.” – Ernest Holmes, *Spiritual Awareness*, p. 74

3. “Every prayer is answered when...we realize Love, Wisdom, Wholeness – the Source of every good thing. And...when we understand that there is a creative Law which responds to us by corresponding to our belief.” – Ernest Holmes, *Spiritual Awareness*, p.11

Supporting Quotes from other relevant sources with citation:

1. “Just as a jewel buried in the earth for a million years is not discolored, our noble heart is not affected by our kicking and screaming. The jewel can be brought out into the light and it will glow brilliantly. No matter how committed we are to unkindness or greed, our heart is completely whole.” – Pema Chodron, *When Things Fall Apart*

2. “There is in all things a hidden wholeness.” – Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

3. “The Beloved said, ‘My name is not complete without yours. I am made

whole by your life. Each soul completes me.’” - Hafiz

A Story that supports today’s topic:

After years of searching for ultimate truth, a seeker was told to go to a cave, in which he would find a well and the answer would be shown. “Ask the well what is Truth,” he was told, “and the well will reveal it to you.” He indeed found the cave and, inside, the well. And he asked the question of his life: “What is Truth?” From the depths of the well there was a reply: “Go to the village crossroad; there you shall find what you are seeking.”

Filled with hope, the man ran to the crossroad, to find only three rather uninteresting shops. One shop was selling pieces of metal, another sold wood, and the third shop sold thin pieces of metal. Nothing and no one there seemed to have much to do with the revelation of Truth. Disappointed, the seeker returned to the well and demanded an explanation, but was told that, in due time, he would understand. Feeling that he had been made to look foolish, he left the cave and set out again on his quest, seeking truth.

Years passed and, as he grew older he moved more slowly, more deliberately. He began spending more time in his life, being more present with what was before him, seeing things more completely. One night as he was walking through a village, the sound of sitar music caught his attention. It was

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

beautiful, played with great mastery and inspiration. Deeply moved, the truth-seeker sat before the sitar player. He looked at the musician's fingers moving over the strings, and began to intently see the sitar itself. In that moment, the truth he sought was revealed: the sitar was made out of wires, pieces of metal, and wood, just like those had seen years before in the three stores at the crossroad. He understood the message of the well, that he had already been given everything he needed. The task is to assemble and use it. The parts of our lives are not so meaningful as long as we perceive only separate fragments. But when we see the fragments as a whole, a deeper, more vivid reality of meaning emerges.

Detailed Examples of Spiritual Tools/Practices applicable to this topic:

Personal Practical Application:

“When listening to another, don't just listen with your mind, listen with your whole body. What really matters is the Being of the other person underneath the words. This is the realization of oneness, which is love.” – Eckhart Tolle
Find where you are called to listen more deeply to the world. Can you see past the surface and experience the Being?

Community Outreach/Collective Practical Application:

“Singing in harmony. Breastfeeding a baby. Collective bargaining. Dancing. Admitting our pain to someone, and hearing them say, ‘Me, too.’ Holiness happens when we are integrated as physical, spiritual, sexual, emotional, and political beings. Holiness is the song that has always been sung, perhaps even the sound that was first spoken when God said, ‘Let there be light.’” – Nadia Bolz-Weber, *Shame-Less*

Create sacred circles where you practice deeply listening to each other. Perhaps take this outside your center to a place where people need to be heard - a hospital, a nursing/care facility, a homeless facility.

Three to five possible discussion questions based on today's topic:

1. What is your definition of wholeness?
2. What limiting belief or idea have you held about your lack of wholeness that you are willing to release?
3. Talk about a time, a moment, when you felt whole, when you felt at One with God (or the Universe, Life, etc.).

Additional reference material:

Wholeness and Holiness, by David Richo

A Hidden Wholeness, by Parker Palmer

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Week One Notes:

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Week Two Topic: Recognizing Wholeness; Seeing the Good in All

Consider this...

In her book, *Grounded: Finding God in the World*, Diana Butler Bass wrote, “When we recognize our common humanity – when we recognize our own humanity in the face of the other – we also recognize the face of God.” There is a vision of love and wholeness deep within us all, an intuitive sense of our Oneness with God and with each other.

A One Sentence Affirmation:

I am One with the Divine and with my fellow beings.

Summary of This Week’s Topic:

We are each a field of intelligence in which we see the Universe and every point of life in it as an unbroken wholeness. All individuals and every relationship, as well as all events, are interconnected, mutually interdependent, and a pattern of perfection. We are all a luminous mystery in which the entire Universe rises, falls, and rests.

Suggested Science of Mind Point of View:

Our lives, regardless of conditions, are one with the Divine and with each other. There can be no separation, for we are all created from the same spiritual essence. A unified wholeness is the pattern of Life, the very energy in which all expressions live, move, and have their being. In *The Science of Mind*, Ernest Holmes states, “Life is one perfect wholeness. The Universe is a unit. God is one.” (463.2)

Three Discussion Points that Illustrate This Point of View:

1. The observance of others as whole can only happen when we have released any sense of dualism, of otherness. In a word, Oneness is the central teaching of the Science of Mind and Spirit, and we must have a direct and deep experience of this Truth. We must be concerted in this highest of spiritual principles. Let’s dedicate ourselves to this walk. Rather than insincerely claiming wholeness and goodness for others, we go about the noble, stretching, and deep work of healing our own illusions of separateness.

2. To see the good in all, we begin by recognizing the spark of divinity at the center of our own being. It is in knowing ourselves as whole and complete – an expression of the One Life of God – that we allow spiritual truth to underscore our relationships. The one who actively courts the presence and love of Spirit has a holy vantage point from which to hold their sisters, brothers, and others. We become soul companions in tune with one another along the journey.

3. In the spirit of the declaration attributed to Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” we can be the friend to others

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

that we want to have in our life. We can recognize the wholeness in others by reaching out and feeling the harmony that comes from acting with love, kindness, and friendship. Cultivating beautiful relationships is a sure-fire way to see the goodness that exists in humanity.

Conclusion and Call to Action:

When Infinite Presence thought each of us into being, It did not discriminate. It poured its complete Goodness into each of us just the same. The Divine created every person on the planet from the same pattern of perfection and instilled in us the energy, beauty, and love of Its own authentic heart. Witnessing the Good in one another is not an anomaly; it is the reason we were given each other, to see the love of God up close.

Three Supporting Quotes from Science of Mind/New Thought Literature with publication title and page number:

1. “Every person is an inlet and may become an outlet to all there is in God.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson, from his essay *History*
2. “Since there is but one Spirit and this Spirit is in you and in everything, then everywhere you go you will meet this Spirit. You meet this Spirit in people, in places and in things.” – Ernest Holmes, *365 Days of Richer Living*
3. “The invisible intelligence that creates anything dwells both within and around that creation. Therefore, we all dwell within the dance of the invisible, creative Genius of this universe.”

– Roger Teel, *This Life is Joy*

Supporting Quotes from other relevant sources with citation:

1. “Where we had thought to find an abomination, we find a god. Where we had thought to slay another, we slay ourselves. Where we had thought to travel outwards, we shall come to the center of our own existence. Where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.” – Joseph Campbell, from *Falling Upward* by Richard Rohr
2. “Imagine that each of us is a spoke in an Infinite Wheel, and, though each spoke is essential in keeping the Wheel whole, no two spokes are the same. The rim of that Wheel is our living sense of community, family, and relationship, but the common hub where all the spokes join is the one center where all souls meet.” – Mark Nepo, *The Book of Awakening*
3. “Heaven and earth and all creation are great, generous, beautiful and good. God's goodness fills all his creatures and endlessly overflows in them.” – Julian of Norwich

A Story that supports today's topic:

The story of the magical soup stone - A mysterious stranger comes to town, and he claims that he has a magical stone that you can cook soup with again and again. Everybody is really incredulous. But, to prove it, he puts it in a pot of boiling water. As the water is boiling, he declares, "Hmm... maybe some spices would make it just a bit better." So someone goes and gets some spices. And the boiling water continues.

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

The bystanders are fascinated. "Maybe some potatoes and some carrots would top it off just great." And the soup is just about done when the stranger says, "Hmm... maybe a bit of meat and some flour would just round off the experience really well." And so forth, it goes on like that. The villagers are amazed! The most wonderful soup is prepared and they have a great feast together, enjoying and celebrating the magical stone soup.

We all hunger in some way. We sometimes think that we have too little, feeling scarcity in our lives. We forget that we are not alone, that there is a vast reservoir of God's life, of substance. We all have ingredients to contribute. In living our lives and re-creating the facets of our experience, we can all contribute. In this spiritual community, we all add the love, the humor, insights, wisdom, creativity, passion. We each put our ingredients into the soup and are all fed, nourished. We all have arms to wrap around each other.

Personal Practical Application:

Consciously, mindfully bless others. Take a walk for the purpose of blessing people. That's all. Everyone you encounter, bless them. As you do this, you become energized because you've been letting God's energy flow through you.

Community Outreach/Collective Practical Application:

Build and cultivate a commUnity garden. Invite your congregation to work together in

creating a vegetable garden. At planting time, gather everyone together and bless the seeds, taking the opportunity for a quick teaching of "as you sow, so shall you reap." At harvest time, unite everyone again and bless the harvest, affirming that the bounty was produced in unity. Bless every person and family who will receive the produce, affirming the connection of everyone.

Three to five possible discussion questions based on today's topic:

1. How can we consciously recognize the wholeness of others as we go about our day? What reminders or signals can we develop? For example, make a practice of seeing the good, the wholeness of other drivers every time we're stopped at a traffic light.
2. Think of someone in your life with whom you are at odds. Purposefully see the good in them, recognizing their wholeness.
3. Consider a challenge you're facing, something that you would pray about. Now, in your prayer, pray for other people who are facing a similar challenge.

Additional reference material:

The Science of Oneness, by Malcolm Hollick

Song: *All That I Am*, by Daniel Nahmod (from the album *Sacred Love*)

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Notes for Week Two:

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Week 3

Week Three Topic Title: In the Name of Wholeness; Enriching the World

Consider This...

The American writer Henry Miller said, “The moment one gives close attention to anything – even a blade of grass – it becomes mysterious, awesome, and indescribably magnificent.” By virtue of our holy place in the Universe, we are charged with the world’s enrichment.

***My awareness of my Oneness with the Universe,
our planet, and every blade of grass, inspires and guides me
in my enrichment of the world.***

Summary of This Week’s Topic:

The spiritual truth of wholeness is the foundation of our world and its residents. As citizens of this holy place – as midwives – we are charged with holding the world in the light of peace, prosperity, perfect right action, and wholeness. We share this love-intelligence with the collective consciousness of humankind and, simply, we do good work in the world.

Suggested Science of Mind Point of View:

To perceive our world as whole and to enrich the atmosphere of a shared life, we must first cultivate a sense of wholeness within ourselves. We release perceptions of separation or insufficiency about our own life, and instill the whole world with an energetic vibration of unity. In this consciousness, we are able to share love, passion, and dynamic activeness with everyone.

Three Discussion Points that Illustrate This Point of View:

1. In order to truly cultivate that depth of belief and trust, we must be pure of mind. We must be clear about our own inherent wholeness and our identity. As we heal false notions and misconceptions about ourselves, we contribute to the healing of the planet.

2. Charles Fillmore said that spiritual realization means “at-one-ment,

completion, perfection, wholeness, repose, resting in God. At-one-ment with God brings a lasting joy that cannot be taken away.”

3. In *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Howard Thurman said, “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Conclusion and Call to Action:

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

In *The Science of Mind*, Ernest Holmes said, “What the world needs is spiritual conviction, followed by spiritual experience. I would rather see a student of this Science prove its Principle than to have him repeat all the words of wisdom that have ever been uttered.” (423.1) In this spirit, we see our earth-home as whole, and then prove this world-view by taking action. Our work, our service, and our relationships are carried out in spiritual certainty.

Three Supporting Quotes from Science of Mind/New Thought Literature with publication title and page number:

1. “We envision all people, all beings, and all life as expressions of God. We see a world in which every person lives in alignment with his/her highest spiritual principle, emphasizing unity with God and connection with each other; a world in which individually and collectively we are called to a higher state of consciousness and action. We envision a world that works for everyone.” – CSL Global Vision
2. “We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole of which these are the shining parts, is the soul. From within or from behind, a light shines through us upon things and makes us aware that we are nothing, but the light is all.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Oversoul*
3. “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.” – Gerald Manley

Hopkins, *Poems and Prose* (from *The Enlightened Heart* by Stephen Mitchell)

Supporting Quotes from other relevant sources with citation:

1. “Dwell in the world which you have created. What you hold in your heart shall be true, and what you most admire, that you shall become. You are life, inventing form.” – Richard Bach, *Illusions*
2. “Ruins, like the old farm equipment in pastures, show us that something remains of beauty in a thing when its function has departed. Soul is then revealed, as though it had been hidden for years under well-oiled functioning. Soul is not about function, it is about beauty and form and memory. Things suffer, as a person would, when they are reduced to their functions. Care of the world soul, therefore, requires that we see things less for what they can do and more for what they are.” – Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul*
3. “There is only Consciousness in all directions, absolute and all-pervading, radiant through and as all conditions, the source and suchness of everything that arises moment to moment, utterly prior to this world but not other than this world. All things are just a ripple in this pond; all arising is a gesture of this one.” – Ken Wilber, *No Boundary*

Stories that support today’s topic:

The view of the whole planet Earth from space symbolizes a birth of consciousness. Astronauts were

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

transformed as they gazed upon the planet from this new perspective. The picture reminds us that we have one incredible planet to care for, and it reminds us that life is a unity. Rusty Schweickart became an astronaut in 1963 and served as the lunar module pilot for Apollo 9. As he circled the globe, identifying places like Los Angeles, Houston, and North Africa, his process of identifying with the world began to shift. “You begin to recognize that your identity is with the whole thing. You look down and can’t imagine how many borders you cross, and you don’t even see them. People killing each other over some imaginary line. But you see it as a whole, and it’s so beautiful, and you wish you could take individuals from each side in various conflicts, one in each hand and say, ‘Look at it from this perspective. What’s important?’ Then, in doing a space walk and being in that incredible silence and beauty, I felt like I was a sensing point for humankind. I recognized that we are all a piece of this total life.”

Teddy Roosevelt, during the toughest time of his administration had a certain practice. When a tough day would end, Roosevelt would take members of his staff and walk outside, and search the night sky until he found the great square of Pegasus. Roosevelt would recite the same lines every night. Pointing to Pegasus, he would say, “This is the spiral galaxy in Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It consists of one hundred billion suns even larger than our own.” And then Roosevelt would smile and say, “Now I think we can handle *our* problems. Let’s go to bed.”

Roosevelt knew that if he kept his bearings, that the grand potential of this nation and the world would be fulfilled. He knew that once our consciousness shifts from a feeling of separateness to one of wholeness, that our vast genius will serve the growth of ourselves and our planet.

Detailed Examples of Spiritual Tools/Practices applicable to this topic:

In seeing the world and everyone in it as whole, we first and foremost include this spiritual insight in our daily prayers. Joel Goldsmith said that as spiritual practitioners, we are called to realize the spiritual nature of the world and the persons who inhabit it. To see this life as “God’s perfect creation, and to feel an omnipresent, loving essence in it.” Our spiritual tools, then, include prayer and meditation, and affirming the omnipresence of good in our world.

Personal Practical Application:

As we live in the world and are about our own business and routines, we can allow every incident of pain or stress to be a reminder that there is goodness at the core of every experience. Let every news account, siren, and “negative” sensation be the invitation to affirm Spirit’s reality of wholeness. Throughout the day, we are affirming the goodness of life.

Community Outreach/Collective Practical Application:

In the community work we do together, begin every outreach and volunteer

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

activity with volunteers gathering for a moment of affirmation. Have affirmation cards printed that members of the congregation can carry and utilize. “Infinite Presence, this work we do today is dedicated to the wholeness and goodness of (the person or organization). We see them now as whole, complete, and empowered by Spirit’s care.”

Three to five possible discussion questions based on today’s topic:

1. What can we do so that the feeling of separateness dissolves through community. This is a vital element of our vision: community as a journey to wholeness.
2. When I am thinking thoughts that are demeaning to a child of God, even if it is

myself, I am demeaning all children of God. Every day is a chance for us to remember our wholeness. To love this physical life in which we live, move, and have our being.

3. God is the essence of all good, and it gives Itself to you and me, to every animating cell of all creatures, and to the planets, the stars, and the Universe. It is, after all, a UNI-verse. One verse. Our spiritual journey is about a return to this truth, this path of the soul, uniting our own consciousness with the invisible, the inevitable, the eternal.

Additional reference material:

Everyday Goodness, by Edward Viljoen
“Becoming a Beneficial Presence,” -
www.consciousbridge.com

Notes from Week Three:

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Week Four

Weekly Topic; Embodying Christ Consciousness; a Wholeness Prototype

Consider This...

The birth and life of Jesus are metaphors for our own celebrations and disappointments. But in our most tender moments, we know that we are even more than that. Christ consciousness is the feeling of wholeness, allowing our natural compassion and our love for one another to reign.

I abide in Christ consciousness, being still and knowing the Truth that I am whole.

Summary of This Week's Topic:

In the manger place of our own heart, we ignite and renew a light of love. Whenever the inner Christ – God's perfect idea of us – is recognized or amplified, it calls us to greater loving because that's its nature. We are called to love, "Even as I have loved you," as Jesus said. The more we discover our true nature and see the Christ as the prototype of wholeness, we realize that we are ordained to follow this path and become the very activity of God. We give birth to the Christ, our hope of glory.

Suggested Science of Mind Point of View:

The Christ is not about just one, radical guy who was born a couple of centuries ago and roamed the Holy Land. Christ is not the last name of a Galilean woodworker, nor a stodgy dogma. Christ isn't a formula for saving yourself from eternal damnation. The Christ is a sweet field of energetic love and law, a gateway through which we can manifest the higher expression of ourselves. Christ is the anointment of wholeness, and Jesus of Nazareth got it. He tapped into a vibration of energetic love and it animated his heart. We are invited to the same experience.

Three Discussion Points that Illustrate This Point of View:

1. We live in a Spiritual Universe, governed by a principle of cause and effect. Deep within each of us is a Presence, a sense of a larger life. Christians call this essence the Christ. Jews call it Immanuel. Buddhists call it the Buddha Mind. The presence of God

– no matter what name it is given – is the spark that animates our life. Jesus said, "The Father and I are One." He taught that it is in One Life that we all live, move, and have our being. And when we get it, when we recognize our unity with Spirit, we can hear Life proclaiming, "My beloved, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

2. The Christmas celebration is an amen to creation, to the Christ presence, which is wholeness. We celebrate this presence as courage, hope, and the spirit of truth. In this season and every season, we honor Divine beingness as nature, as quality time with companions, and as the Divine feminine. Christmas is taking on the qualities of Spirit, the Christ, in no-boundary living.

3. The child in the manger who grew to be the great prophet of Oneness and empowerment represents the Christ in us, our hope of glory. We are strengthened by this hope; by the wholeness that is our highest self.

Conclusion and Call to Action:

In the realization of wholeness during this Christmas time, let's up-level our prayer practice. Prayer, which removes our false ideas of lack, limitation, and separation, makes us free. All the while we may have thought of ourselves as something less than whole, there was something within us that knew differently. There is a pattern of perfection that can never be disrupted. And, when we pray for ourselves, for others, and for our world, we touch that place. We come home, and the part of us that always held our wholeness, does rejoice.

Three Supporting Quotes from Science of Mind/New Thought Literature with publication title and page number:

1. "The Christ means the entire manifestation of God...and (we) 'put on the Christ' to the degree that (we) surrender a limited sense of Life to the divine realization of wholeness and unity." – Ernest Holmes, *The Science of Mind*

2. "To carry peace, love, and givingness to everyone is the meaning of Christmas. To feel that we all are a part of the Divine offering is to enter into the spirit of the birth of Christ in the human mind and heart. – Ernest Holmes, *Science of Mind Magazine*, December 1962

3. "Christmas has little magic in it when we are just looking backward to worship the child in the manger. Magic is found by looking forward to that day when our own Christ Child may unfold in our lives – a time to look inward to Its presence, right now."
- Eric Butterworth, Christmas Eve radio broadcasts.

Supporting Quotes from other relevant sources with citation:

1. "Christ is born in us today in order that he may appear to the whole world through us." – Thomas Merton, *Meditations on Liturgy*

2. "Christmas, the remembrance of the birth of Jesus, is not a remembrance at all. It is an awareness that grows in us from day to day all our lives. Christmas, this consciousness of eternal Life alive among us, is not a feast day, it is a ferial

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

day that never ends.” – Joan Chittister,
In Search of Belief

3. “As a wee lad of five, we'd be riding along rural country roads in the black of night, and we'd spot kerosene lamps flickering brightly in distant farmhouse windows. That light, I promise, had a way of leaping off the premises and landing in my heart. That recollection never fails to inspire. Same with prayer. I'd ask you to join with me this Christmas and let prayer stream out our windows and inebriate the world with Hope. I'm thinking the baby Jesus might go along with this notion. I'm planning on letting Christmas have its way with me, no holds barred. The novelty of Christmas is this: God itching to become a baby. What an imagination. Get ready, get set, wash your windows, and make them glow.” – Evan Hodkins, *The School of Alchemy*

A Story that supports today's topic:

There's a beautiful story about a small statuette in a pawn shop. A man was browsing the shop and, amid the clutter of jars and ornaments and other things, he found a little statue of an angel holding the hand of a young boy. The man was inspired to rescue it from the oblivion of this antique shop and he took it home to give it a place of honor among his Christmas decorations. The piece was chipped and dirty, but he began cleaning it up and covered it with white glistening paint. Then he painted the wings of the angel and the hair of the little boy with gold. Little by little, with

each brush stroke, that dingy old statue was transformed into a thing of beauty. Isn't this what happens for us at Christmas? We come to the end of the year, perhaps a little chipped and dirty from our struggles all year, and then Christmas inspires us to repaint the angels of our own nature with love and joy and peace.

Detailed Example of Spiritual Tools/Practices applicable to this topic:

Let's face it; forgiveness may be the toughest, most resistance-laden thing we'll ever do. But it is the most liberating, life-changing, powerful spiritual practice we can be about. Jesus the Christ showed us time and again how to forgive, and we're still talking about him all these days since. There isn't a “one-size-fits-all” recipe for forgiveness, but all the methods that have been written about for the art of forgiveness say this: begin by forgiving yourself. Let yourself out of the prison of hurt and resentment. Freed from this encumbrance, we can do anything.

Personal Practical Application:

Make a point of seeing the Christ in everyone you meet, even the old so-and-so who, up until now, you never thought of in holy terms.

Community Outreach/Collective Practical Application:

Go about any one of the traditional Christmas generousities, but do it this year more mindfully than ever. Allow the

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

gifts given, the hunger satisfied, the connection with family, friends, and strangers, be offered with a deep, conscious sense of blessing.

Three to five possible discussion questions based on today's topic:

1. What is your personal definition of the "Christ," and how can you exercise it in your relationships?
2. Talk about a time you recognized the "Christ" – a sense of wholeness – in another person and how it touched your life.
3. If it were to be scientifically, historically proven that the person of Jesus never really existed, that beyond

a doubt there never was a man from Galilee who inspired us to love, forgive, and perform our own miracles, how would that change your celebration of Christmas? How would it affect your faith or belief system?

Additional reference material:

Metaphysical Meditations, by Paramahansa Yogananda
Out of the Ordinary, by Joyce Rupp
Eric Butterworth's A Dream on Christmas Message:
https://archive.org/details/podcast_discovering-eric-butterworth_a-dream-on-christmas-eve_1000447680171

Notes from Week Four

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Week Five

Week Five Topic: A Wholeness Resolution

Consider This...

Every day this year, no matter the circumstances, we can choose to feel blessed, be a blessing for others, and allow wholeness to be the lens through which we view our lives and the world.

***I am made in the image of the Divine, and
I recognize this goodness in others.***

Summary of This Week's Topic:

This new year, we can have some fun with the usual resolutions we make for living better. And, we can go deeper. We can resolve to live with wholeness, to live free from attachment, to live wisely with humility, justly with compassion, lovingly with fidelity, and gratefully with generosity. We can hold this vision and daily renew it in our hearts.

– from *Out of the Ordinary*, by Joyce Rupp

Suggested Science of Mind Point of View:

As we begin a new year, we do so with an affirmation of the wholeness of life. We can underscore the resolutions we make with a daily practice of calling on the indwelling Spirit to keep us steadfast, faithful, and energized. This year, we forge a clear vision about manifesting the qualities of God in our endeavors. This year, we daily remind ourselves that we are one with God and with the promises we seek to fulfill. We are open, receptive, and responsive to Divine inspiration and guidance. We each have the human capacity and the spiritual wherewithal to allow the coming year to be a truly blessed and joyous time and to create a time of healing, renewal, and wholeness made visible. This year, we can be more generous, kind, and light-hearted. We can be more centered on the things of this life that reflect our deepest heart and our most noble intentions.

Three Discussion Points that Illustrate This Point of View:

1. As we look back on the year just completed, let's give thanks for all of it – the good we experience and the things that we wouldn't necessarily name good. Be grateful for it all: the blessings and the learning. Only as we have

reconciled and befriended every aspect of the past year are we in good stead to accept the blessings of what's coming.

2. As we begin a new year, a next chapter, it is empowering to know that the most important impression on our life is our awareness of Divine Presence in all

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

things. Goodness is ever available to us, seeking to touch our lives in subtle and overt ways. In this year, we can truly find meaning if we're living mindfully. In our resolutions, we can hold our treasures – the relationships and acts of generosity – as the foundation for the things we want to manifest. This year, let's consciously choose each day what we hold as precious, and let's carry peace within ourselves and share it with others.

3. In our new year, we can choose to release our beliefs and actions that keep us stilted, those ideas about ourselves and life that inhibit us living the fulfilled life that God desires for us. You know how sometimes we're just a little timid at letting all our music out? We're a little shy at being magnificent, so we do these little mediocre things to just blend in with rest of humanity. Let's stop that! Let's rise up and understand that it is our destiny to live a life of wholeness, to reveal the kingdom of God. As we're carrying out our resolve, our promises for the year, let's mindfully know that the love, poise, and power of God is more authentic than our illusions of limitations. We are one with the same Power that created the Cosmos, the same life energy that has made all things lovely and elegant. That's our divine heritage, and that's the reality of our yet-to-be's this coming year.

Conclusion and Call to Action:

We do well to pay attention to the day after the chief moments of our lives, like

the day after January 1. For, on that day, we tend to return to customary living. Our values, beliefs, and intentions are revealed on the day following the momentous occasion, the second mile of the long race, the day after a new beginning. The energy of the day-after sets the tone for going forward. Our call to action is to pay attention to the morning after. Make a list of a few momentous events upcoming this year, giving yourself a calendar reminder to live the next day on purpose.

Three Supporting Quotes from Science of Mind/New Thought Literature with publication title and page number:

1. "A spiritual practitioner consciously removes the apparent obstruction and leaves the field open to a new influx of Spirit. He resolves things into thoughts, dissolves the negative appearance in the condition by recognizing only perfection. The practitioner must know that there are no obstacles in the pathway of Truth. (She) must know that her word, being the activity of Truth, removes all obstructions." – Ernest Holmes, *Religious Science*

2. "Let each resolve to be true to himself, true to his inner light, true to the Truth."
- Ernest Holmes, *The Science of Mind* (453.3)

3. "Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year." – Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Society and Solitude*

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Supporting Quotes from other relevant sources with citation:

1. “Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one.”

– Brad Paisley

2. “We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. This year, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives not looking for flaws, but for potential” – Ellen Goodman

3. “And now we welcome the new year. Full of things that have never been.”

- Rainer Maria Rilke

A Story that supports today’s topic:

Here’s a true story – a metaphor, really – about the kind of energetic blessing that we can strive for during this coming year. In 2005, off the coast of San Francisco, there was a female humpback whale who had become entangled in a web of crab traps and lines. The fifty-foot whale was weighed down by hundreds of pounds of traps that caused her to struggle to stay afloat. She also had hundreds of yards of line rope wrapped around her tail and torso, and a line tugging in her mouth. A fisherman spotted her and radioed an environmental group for help. Within a few hours, the rescue team arrived and determined that she was so bad off, the only way to save her was to dive in and untangle her – a very dangerous proposition. One slap of the tail could kill

a rescuer. They worked for hours with curved knives and eventually freed her. When she was free, the divers say she swam in what seemed like joyous circles. She then came back to each and every diver, one at a time, and nudged them, pushed them gently around, thanking them. Some said it was the most incredibly beautiful experience of their lives. The guy who cut the rope out of her mouth says her eye was following him the whole time, and he will never be the same. May you, and all those you love, be so blessed and fortunate during this next year. May you be surrounded by people who will help you get untangled from the things that are binding you. And may you always know the joy of giving and receiving gratitude.

Detailed Examples of Spiritual Practices applicable to this topic:

The spiritual practices of releasing the past, visioning, and affirmations can be the framework for manifesting the good we desire. Release that which no longer serves us and is cluttering up our channel of expressed goodness.

Visioning is a way that draws us to our desired outcome, where we’re not so much trying to make things happen; we’re making God welcome in our endeavors. And, always, daily affirming with trust that the Good we desire is divinely inspired, and we are worthy.

Personal Practical Application:

The next time you’re making a New Year’s toast, tell a quick story that

2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

illustrates your sentiment. Be authentic, and don't wait for the perfect moment. Then, as you're courting the blessings of your resolution, use a similar approach. Remind yourself of a joy that you've experienced, something that can be a point of reference for the newness you want. And, as you are about the business of manifesting your good, be authentic and humble in your plans and prayers. And don't wait for the right moment. This is the moment.

Community Outreach/Collective Practical Application:

As a group – a congregation – make a collective New Year's resolution to hold others in the Light. Make an "Extra Grace" list of organizations that your group will jointly pray about. Commit to seeing the goodness in the organization and the people associated with it. Send it/them your love and blessings.

Three possible discussion questions based on today's topic:

1. In beginning a new year, what do you want every child and adult in your life to know about themselves and the possibilities for their happiness?
2. What is one thing you can release – one idea or misconception – that you feel is encumbering your advancement in this life?
3. What qualities do you possess that can absolutely set you up for fulfillment?

Additional reference material:

The Illuminated Life, by Joan Chittister
No Time Like the Present, by Jack Kornfield

More info:

Each month Rev. Jack Elliott edits the Study Guide as a way of expressing this Centers for Spiritual Living's (csl.org) Global Heart Theme.

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2023 Global Theme – *Living Out Loud!*

Notes for Week Five: