

PREFACE

What's this all about?

Scripture and spirituality are huge areas for merchandise. Picking up a book of the Jewish and Christian scriptures can be an effort in itself in terms of weight, and the spirituality book industry has spawned thousands of new works in the last few decades. Where to start? How to process? What to hang onto and what to let go?

This production attempts to give a “way in” to the key elements of the Christian tradition by distilling seven major themes or “echoes” that run through the scriptures. These themes are not arbitrarily chosen, but come from a “macro” view of both the biblical writings and the great Christian spiritual authors through the centuries.

These are the seven themes referred to in this book:

- A. **Living Life-Death-Life**
- B. **It's about grace, not collecting badges**
- C. **It's never what you expect**
- D. **Engagement and detachment**
- E. **The discovery and expansion of soul-space**
- F. **The two sided coin: prayer and non-violence**
- G. **There is only One**

These echoes are each divided into ten **sub-themes** that break open the echoes' richness, as they are mirrored in the scriptures and in the essence of Christian spirituality. These seventy sub-themes have four key scripture references each – making a total of 280 biblical passages that highlight the unfolding of the human experience of encounter with God.

Furthermore, each of the seventy sub-themes has **three points for consideration and reflection**. These aren't discussion starters or quiz questions, but reflections from the standpoint of what many in the Christian tradition have named “spiritual direction”. They are prayerful suggestions that invite a response from the level of soul and not simply from the intellect.

At the end of each sub-theme section, there is what's called a “**Daily Mantra**”. This is a short statement that can be carried within your memory and used as a “meditation starter” while waiting for the “don't walk” sign to change or when you're doing the washing up. Hold the mantra within you and breathe it in and out so it can become part of your day.

These seven themes and seventy sub-themes can be used in a variety of ways. You might use them very methodically to pray through each day or each week. You may just wish to dive into the book when you're searching your soul for a way to meet a particular situation and you're not sure how to approach it in a prayerful manner. Go with whatever helps.

There are two packs of cards that have come with *"A God to Fall Into"*. The larger pack contains seventy cards that correspond with each of the seventy sub-themes, and the smaller pack has thirty-five cards. This smaller pack is the collection of **"Disposition" cards**, which you can use to help you link in with the ways which Gospel characters respond to the invitation of Jesus into greater life. The full explanation of these cards forms the last section of the book. See "How to use these cards for prayer" that follows.

All scripture references are taken from the Jerusalem Bible.

How to use these cards for prayer

Prayer cards have had a long history in Christian spirituality. Whether they are the evangelical scripture cards, the “holy cards” of Roman Catholic tradition that portray an image of Jesus, Mary or the saints, or inspiration magnets that you can stick on your fridge – we need little ways to help us drop through into a prayerful and more grace-filled space, so we can re-see what’s happening in our life circumstances, and so let the Spirit transform us.

Always begin your choosing with a prayer for inspiration to the Spirit, asking that you be in a space of listening to what God might wish to say to you at the moment. Openness is the most important ingredient in prayer, and don’t be put off by any card you might choose that doesn’t seem to “fit” where you are. The soul isn’t interested so much in solutions to problems, so much as seeing how there can be *resolutions*. That is, the Spirit is interested in transformation of your soul, not so much whether you get what you think you want at the time!

You can use these cards in a variety of ways. For example:

A. “What’s a prayer-thought for today?”

You could choose one card at the beginning of your day and hold the thought given on it. You could even take the card with you in your purse or wallet and glance at it now and then throughout the day.

B. “What would speak to the space I’m in at the moment?”

After some time of quiet prayer, you might like to ask God what would be helpful for you to remember at this time about scripture and the spiritual journey. Mix up the cards face-down, and then choose two cards completely at random. Then ask yourself: “*How might these two thoughts be pertinent for me? How are these thoughts differing yet complementary for my life at the moment?*” You’ll see that every card has a number that refers to its description in the book. You can read the accompanying relevant scripture passages and spiritual direction reflections there.

C. “How am I invited to die and to be raised with Christ at this time in my life?”

Choose two cards from the large pack as on “B” above. Ask God in prayer to help you see what disposition might help you best to live the spiritual journey of dying and rising with Christ at this moment. Then choose one card from the “Disposition” pack. This will tell you of a New Testament character’s way of engaging with God, and in particular, their way of relating with Jesus. Look at

the spread, and take your time in asking how these three cards are inviting you into a deeper trust that God knows and loves the best about you, and is calling you into greater surrender and therefore greater life.

For example:

After a time of settling yourself and asking for the Spirit's inspiration, you spread out the large pack of cards face down and choose one from the pack.

You pick **35** from "Engagement and Detachment": "*Cling to nothing*". Then choosing another, you pick **24** from "It's Not What You Expect": "*Let God be gracious*". Turn to the relevant pages in this book and see what the full description of each of these is. How do they strike you? What comes up in you as you read and reflect upon these?

Then take the smaller pack, the "Disposition" cards, and spread them out face down like you did with the first pack. Then choose one.

You pick **24**: "*The GENTLENESS of John the Apostle*". This describes the attitude you can bring to holding together the first two cards. Refer to the description of these cards towards the back of this book.

A way of putting together these cards is: you can begin to let go of whatever you have been holding onto (#35) by letting the awareness of God's grace be more prevalent in you (#24). The disposition in which you can live this awareness is through gentleness of spirit like John the Apostle, who let Jesus love the whole of him. Carry the spirit of these three cards with you as you go about your daily tasks.

D. Your own design.

You might wish to be creative by designing your own way to arrange your choices, according to the situation at hand. The only stipulation is that you ask in a spirit of trust for the gift of God's guidance. If you're not in a good space (for example a cranky mood), then tell God about this and what it's like to be in a bad mood. By sharing the feelings of your present state of mind, you then can invite the awareness of God into how you're feeling.

Scripture is meant to help us encounter God, not to subtly shield us from God. May your prayer time lead you into knowing more truly the Divine Presence!

SEVEN ECHOES

Living Life-Death-Life

0. Let God be born in you
The birth of Jesus
1. Plug into the pattern
"Unless a wheat grain falls to the ground and dies ..."
2. It's not about how you're doing
The Baptism of Jesus
3. Let your head meet your heart
Risen Jesus with Thomas
4. Trust the dyings in your life
The Crucifixion
5. The resurrection's here to stay
The Resurrection
6. What's the invitation being given you?
"Mary pondered these things in her heart"
7. What do you really want – really?
"Not my will but yours be done"
8. It's alright to be unfinished
Weeds and Wheat
9. You're can't fall out of God
Risen Jesus with Peter

It's about grace, not collecting badges

10. Don't forget where you live
Transfiguration
11. Don't try to construct yourself
Zaccheus
12. You're saved from saving yourself
"It's pleased your Father to give you the kingdom"
13. No one's more worthy than anyone else
"God's sun shines on the just and unjust alike"
14. Don't lock yourself up
The prodigal son
15. Don't freeze yourself to death
The Older Son
16. Forgiveness is already given
"This woman's sins must have been forgiven ..."
17. Why not risk everything
The Rich Young Man
18. Let grace green your soul
Annunciation
19. Let the Spirit move in you
Pentecost

It's not what you expect

20. Upside down is the right way up
Shepherds and the Magi
21. God's not what you think
The Syro-Phoenician woman
22. Let God blow your mind
Washing of the Feet
23. Is your perspective too narrow?
"Lord do you want us to call down fire from heaven?"
24. Let God be gracious to you
The father in the Prodigal Son story
25. What's your adversary teaching you?
"Love your adversaries"
26. Your weakness is your way in
The Pharisee and the Publican
27. Let your wounds become sacred wounds
Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial
28. God wastes nothing
Lost Sheep and Lost Coin
29. Be as human as Jesus
"I am the gate of the sheepfold"

Engagement and Detachment

30. Hold tightly yet lightly
The Visitation to Elizabeth
31. Don't crave for control
Massacre of the Innocents
32. Clear the decks of "isms" idols
Clearing of the Temple
33. Say yes to the descent
The Sign of Jonah
34. Let your stage be torn down
"He must increase I must decrease"
35. Don't cling to anything
Risen Jesus with Mary Magdalene
36. Leave your old nets
Calling of the Disciples
37. There's meaning in temptation
Jesus' temptations in the wilderness
38. Stay with Jesus in the tomb
The Descent into Hell
39. Love so you can see
Sermon on the Mount

The discovery and expansion of soulspace

40. Let soulspace be created within you
Gethsemane
41. Stay awake!
The Ten Bridesmaids
42. Beware the fog of fear
"Your life is not made secure by what you own"
43. What's corroding your soul?
The Gerasene demoniac
44. Engage God's gaze
"Rejoice your names are written in heaven"
45. Respond don't react
Picking corn on the sabbath
46. Let God be God
The miracles of Jesus
47. Live your deepest truth fully
Carrying the Cross
48. Let your wounds be caressed
The healings of Jesus
49. Let God's light shine out from you
The mission to the world

The two-sided coin: prayer and non-violence

50. Say yes to radical soul surgery
"Woe to you, scribes and pharisees!"
51. What swords do you carry?
"Put away your sword"
52. How are you selling out?
"The one who lives by the sword dies by the sword"
53. Don't let the system fool you
"This is intolerable language' – they no longer walked with him"
54. Forgiveness frees you to breathe
"Father forgive them; they don't know what they do"
55. Forgiveness frees you to have a future
"I have come to bring freedom for prisoners"
56. There's no need to keep punishing
"Do not return evil with evil"
57. How are you using your resources?
The Rich Man and Lazarus
58. Look for the Greater Panorama
Emmaus Journey
59. Live God's Justice and Mercy
The Good Samaritan

There is Only One

60. Be what you are to do what you must
The Prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper
61. Pray your deepest desires
"I thank you Father for hearing my prayer"
62. You're within the One Joy and One Sorrow
"As often as you do to the least, you do to Me"
63. You aren't meant to fly solo
"Father I want those you have given me to be with me where I am"
64. You're within the Great Web
"Whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent Me"
65. You are eternal
"The Kingdom of God is at hand"
66. The only moment is now
"Set your hearts on God's kingdom first"
67. Be in the all-in love affair
"You are in me and I am in you"
68. See from within Jesus
"It's not about saying 'Lord Lord', but doing the Father's will"
69. Let God be born again and again in you
Nicodemus

DISPOSITIONS FOR THE JOURNEY

1. The REFLECTIVE ATTENTION of Mary Mother of Jesus
2. The TRUST of Joseph husband of Mary
3. The PATIENCE of Elizabeth
4. The HOPE of Simeon and Anna
5. The TENACITY of John the Baptist

6. The UNSOPHISTICATION of the Shepherds
7. The INTUITION of the Magi
8. The HUMILITY of the Roman Centurion
9. The RESOLVE of the woman with the haemorrhage
10. The IMPLORING by Jairus for his daughter

11. The OPENNESS of the children
12. The DEVOTION of Mary Magdalene
13. The GUILLESSNESS of Nathaniel
14. The INQUIRING SPIRIT of Nicodemus
15. The PROMISE of the mustard seed

16. The RENEWAL of the adulterous woman
17. The FAITH of blind Bartimaeus
18. The EXTRAVAGANCE of the woman who anoints Jesus
19. The CURIOSITY of Zaccheus
20. The HONESTY of Thomas

21. The GRATITUDE of the one leper out of ten
22. The FRANKNESS of the Syro-Phoenician woman
23. The PERSEVERANCE of the man looking for fine pearls
24. The GENTLENESS of John the Apostle
25. The INCLUSIVITY of the Good Samaritan

26. The QUESTIONING of the Samaritan woman at the well
27. The BIG-HEARTEDNESS of Peter
28. The HOSPITALITY of Martha
29. The DARING of Mary sister of Martha
30. The COMPASSION of the forgiving father to his son

31. The SHINING FORTH of the lamp on the lampstand
32. The TRUTH-SPEAKING of the centurion at the cross
33. The GRACIOUSNESS of Joseph of Arimathea
34. The JOY of the apostles at the Resurrection and Ascension
35. The WONDER of the disciples on the road to Emmaus