

Spiritual Practice 7/26 - Lydia

Hi, pastor Lydia again. I'll be taking us through a spiritual practice today. It's been a thing we're doing every week these days, something we've done in our regular worship services in some ways or form, but actually having been able to really give it a slot in our online worship. Spiritual practices are a nice way to bring your mind, body, and spirit, into a suspended moment to focus. It's prayer, it's mindfulness, it's a practice of inviting God into our time, our bodies, our focus.

I especially like it because some of Christian traditions I've grown up in has often been so much about the mind, learning, listening, theology, bible study, speaking prayers out loud. I've also enjoyed a more embodied experiences and tradition where I'd watch my parents kneel over and groan and cry in prayer, or practices called Interplay that I used to do in seminary where you interact with your body as you think or meditate. Our post enlightenment generation, we know now, has actually elevated the intellectual on a pedestal and with that we lose so much of the wisdom and healing that the body connection to mind and spirit can give us. So today's practice is just another way to invite you to be aware of your bodies, noticing our bodies, listening to and experiencing our bodies more. And like any practice, it gets easier and you learn to notice better, as you do more.

Especially in these times we're in, some say we're experiencing a social trauma through these covid times. As someone who has done some personal work with trauma, I've found being able to notice and be in tune with our bodies through and beyond trauma towards healing is so so helpful. I was reminded of this from a podcast that pastor Ivy had sent, On Being by Krista Tippett interviewing Resmaa Menakem, a therapist and trauma specialist. He talked about how much race trauma we hold in our bodies and invited folks to a body practice that I'll incorporate into mine today. So, just very short body awareness invitations to try out. You can do them anytime you want, or when you need some connection to your body in a moment of anxiety....

So let's begin. Let's start by finding a comfortable neutral position. If you'd like you can sit straight, with both feet on the floor, or sit on the ground if that feels good to you. And you're probably at home, so even feel free to lay down if you'd like. Let's start with a few breaths. Breathing always brings awareness to our bodies, that actually carry so much wisdom and pain. Take a few deep breaths into your body.

Notice if you have any tension anywhere, your neck, your shoulders, your hips.... Try to breathe into those tensions, sometimes I like to put my hand on them, like a healing hand to comfort. Notice anything that comes to your mind. When you silence yourself for a moment, or sit in stillness, sometimes things come up that you hadn't given a

moment to. If it's something positive, great, hold that and breath into that with gratitude. If it's something negative, like a worry, or replaying of something you regret, maybe an interaction or a conversation, or something that you were bothered by. Notice the thought, and notice the feelings, and then go back to your body. Breath in and out.

and to give just some move and disruption to what Resmaa Menakem calls engaging the psoas muscle and the vagal muscle, places we sometimes tense up and hold when we feel danger or discomfort. Try looking straight ahead first, just noticing what's in front of you, notice what you perceive, what you're working with, and then, using your neck and hip, look over your left shoulder. Now same way, look over your right shoulder and just look around, using your neck and hip. Now look back straight.

Notice your body and take a few more breaths. Take a few moments to notice anything different if at all. That is all, a short look around, Resmaa Menakem reminds us that though we're thinking beings, our bodies like animal instincts carry with us the discomfort that might be asking what else is going on, and looking around helps us to reorient ourselves in these times.

A way to engage our bodies in moments where our mind even gets stuck, is an invitation we can try on, whether through moments of distress or trauma. Let's take a few more breaths to end our time.

As God became incarnate, embodied in Jesus, I bless your bodies through all that it may experience, feel, and hold today and this week. Amen.