

Patterns for Following Jesus Today

Transmission of experience of God

The primary vocation of every Christian and Christian faith community is the transmission of experience of God. This includes a commitment to continuing spiritual formation and manifesting that personal experience of God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, in daily life.

A path toward experience of God

Four aspects in the life of Jesus of Nazareth provide a path that leads toward experience of God. These four patterns in his daily life provided opportunities for a flow of energy between Jesus and God, whom he called his “Abba.” Jesus proclaimed that all his words and actions had their source in his experience of God. He made it clear that persons who entrust their lives in his care will share his experience of God. Collectively, these four patterns may be called “a life of prayer.” As I reflect on my experience of life, my spiritual formation, the influence of my primary spiritual mentors, the opportunities I have been given to mentor other persons, and the various ministries that have enabled me to serve Christian faith communities and society, I realize that my life and my vision of the Christian path have been guided and empowered by Jesus’ life of prayer, through the activity of the Holy Spirit.

(1) **Quiet listening:** As individual Christians and faith communities develop disciplined patterns of quiet listening to God in some form of contemplative prayer, we will enter into the mystery of God’s presence. This internal and mutual experience opens an unconditional stream of love and intimacy with God.

(2) **Faithful discernment:** The experience of intimacy with God through quiet listening will guide and empower a person to discern ways his or her life can reflect God’s desires for human life. This change of consciousness will enable a person to hear that same voice in every other aspect of that person’s life and will prompt discovery of opportunities for compassionate engagement in the lives of other people.

(3) **Commitment to the scriptures and life of religious community:** Jesus always found time to listen to God, the world around him, and his inner self. This listening heart was the source of the guidance and desire which, along with direct experience of God’s love, led and sometimes drove him into compassionate involvement in the lives of others. But all this took place in the context of his active involvement in the life of his religious community. Participation in a faith community provides worship, sacraments, spiritual formation and teaching, fellowship, and opportunities for mutual support. Modern faith communities can reflect the richness of the Christian tradition by following the Christian liturgical year, with a focus on the sacraments—especially the Eucharist (Holy Communion), offering a variety of opportunities for spiritual formation that emphasizes study of the life of Jesus, mentoring members in prayer and meditation, and involving both clergy and lay persons in the leadership of the congregation. All these aspects form an environment of grace that will guide and empower a person as a follower of Jesus and to transmit experience of God.

(4) **Compassionate engagement with society:** Quiet listening and contemplative prayer are not ends in themselves. As a person is formed through experience of God in prayer she or he will begin to manifest what he or she has become, in God, in his or her daily life. These four patterns in Jesus’ life show that a life of prayer will lead a person deeper into the heart of God and at the same time deeper into the life of the world. A life of prayer opens a person to experience God’s unconditional

love and that experience becomes the womb of compassionate love of others. Personal and corporate ministries proceed from intimacy with God.

These patterns have offered me a path and foundation for following Jesus today. They, along with my personal prayer, study, and mentors through five decades, have given meaning, purpose, and vision to my life and ministry as I have tried to follow Jesus.

The essays, booklets, recorded talks, and books on this website summarize what I have experienced and learned on my Christian path. It is my hope they will guide you on your path.