

With this Sunday being Father's Day, it is timely that earlier this month, while addressing a crowd in St. Peter's Square, Pope Francis said that Christians can nourish their spirituality by calling God "Father." While he was speaking mostly to Catholics, his words provide a good opportunity for all Christians to think about what Jesus was teaching us when he addressed God as Father. So that will be the topic of this installment of *The Wired Word*.

If you'd prefer a different topic, look at our second lesson, which opens with a story about a bored computer programmer who created an app to "randomize" his life by suggesting activities he might never have considered. We take the opportunity to discuss how God invites us to risk stepping out of the bubbles of habit, convenience and preference into new adventures as we follow Jesus.

The Editorial Team of *The Wired Word*



Call God 'Father,' Pope Tells Audience

The Wired Word for the Week of June 18, 2017

In the News

Earlier this month, at his weekly general audience, Pope Francis told a crowd of 15,000 gathered in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican that calling God "Father" rather than simply "God" can deepen their spirituality and nourish their Christian hope.

"The entire mystery of Christian prayer is summed up here, in this word: to have the courage to call God by the name of Father," the pontiff said.

"Calling God by the name 'Father' is not something that can be taken for granted," the pope said. "We are tempted to use the highest titles, which are respectful of his transcendence. But calling him 'Father' puts us in his confidence, like a child talking to his dad, knowing that he is loved and cared for by him."

Referencing the parable of the prodigal son, Francis said, "God is a Father in his own way: good, helpless before man's free will, only able to conjugate the verb to love. God is a father who does not apply human justice and is ready to forgive and embrace his long-lost son."

Pope Francis, whom many people, whether Roman Catholic or not view as an open-minded and understanding leader, concluded the audience by urging his listeners to think about their necessities, their problems, and to turn to God in confidence and hope. He then led them in praying the Lord's Prayer, which Catholics often refer to as "the Our Father."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[What to Call God: Pray to 'The Father,' Pope Francis Urges Catholics.](#) *Newsweek*

[Pope Francis: Don't be Afraid to Call God 'Father.'](#) *Gospel Herald*

[Names of God.](#) *Bible.org*

Applying the News Story

Protestant and other Christians have long used "Father" as a way to address and speak about God, along with several other scriptural titles, including God, the Lord, the Almighty, Everlasting God, Lord of Hosts, Sovereign, Lord of All, I Am, Heavenly Shepherd, Judge, Abba, Rock, Fortress and others. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he had them begin "Our Father."

And, to not limit thought about God to the masculine gender, some people address God as Heavenly Parent or Father-and-Mother God or something similar, names which, while not used directly in scripture, are supported by biblical assertions or metaphors about God. (Some Christians take exception to this practice, and believe that when this is done as a rejection of calling God "Father," it is also a rejection of God as portrayed in scripture.)

The point is, however, because God is more than any single name can encompass, scripture and Christians have used many names for God, with Father being one of them. As the hymn "Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud," puts it:

*May the church at prayer recall that no single holy name
but the truth behind them all is the God whom we proclaim.*

The Big Questions

1. To what degree do you find addressing God as "Father" to be helpful to your praying and spiritual life? Are there any ways in which that title is a hindrance to you? Why?
2. To what degree is the way you address God colored by experience with one or both of your parents?
3. Consider the pope's statement that "God is a Father in his own way: good, helpless before man's free will, only able to conjugate the verb to love." What can he mean that God is "helpless" before our free will? What does it mean that God is "only able to conjugate the verb to love."
4. What, if anything, is the difference between reciting and praying the Lord's Prayer?
5. If you prefer to address God using a title other than "Father," what title do you prefer and why?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Psalm 68:5

Father of orphans and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. (For context, read 68:5-6.)

Psalm 103:10-14

*[God] does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion for his children,
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.
For he knows how we were made;
he remembers that we are dust.*
(For context, read 103:1-14.)

We are so used to hearing God addressed as "Father" that it may come as a surprise to realize that as a *title* for God, "Father" is not used in the Old Testament. In fact, to the devout Jews of that time, even God's name *Yahweh* (usually rendered in English as LORD, in all caps, as it is in the passage above) was considered so holy that they would not speak it; thus, to address God by such an intimate term as Father would have been intolerably presumptuous.

There are, however, a few instances in that testament where "father" is used to *describe*, *compare* or to *picture* God, but in those places, it is not used as God's name. The verses above, from Psalms 68 and 103, are examples.

Psalms 68 describes a function of God, as the ultimate parent of orphans, but does not address God by that title.

Psalms 103 says that when it comes to compassion toward those who fear him, God behaves *as a father does*. Knowing that not all human fathers behave compassionately toward their children, we might want to add a qualifier, so as to say "God behaves as a *good* father does." But the psalmist apparently assumes his readers will understand that only good parenting emulates God.

In any case, the usage of "father" in these verses, comparing God to a father, supports what happens in the New Testament, where Jesus calls God Father.

For other Old Testament examples, see Proverbs 3:11-12 and Isaiah 64:8.

Questions: What is the writer of Psalm 103 getting at when saying "For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust"? How far, according to the psalmist, does God remove our transgressions from us?

Matthew 6:9

Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. (For context, read 6:7-15.)

There is a period of about 400 years between the close of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New, and somewhere during that time, references to God as Father were added to the liturgy of the Jewish synagogue, but even then, it was applied to God primarily in relation to the nation

of Israel -- God as the Father of Israel. For much of that time, no individual Jew would have addressed God so personally on his or her own behalf.

By the time the New Testament begins, however, there were Jewish prayers in use that addressed God as "Our Father" in a more personal way. And in the verse above, the opening line of what we call the Lord's Prayer, Jesus used that term to address God.

For Jesus, however, Father was not a general term for the deity, but was, first of all, Jesus' word for his own relationship with God. For Jesus, *Father* means the one who loves his children and knows how to give good gifts to them (see Matthew 7:11).

Question: What single term best describes your relationship with God?

Mark 14:36

[Jesus] said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." (For context, read 14:32-42.)

Jesus sometimes used an even more intimate name for God, which still implied Father. That term is Abba, which would be something like "Papa." In that day, abba was used by both little children and adult offspring to address their male parent. That is how it is used today in Israel, in both Hebrew and Arabic. Jesus' use of it for God indicated a close, personal relationship, and the early church continued Jesus' practice of identifying and addressing God as Abba, Father (see Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6).

Questions: Do you ever think of God as Papa or Dad? Why or why not? Should you?

Luke 15:20

So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. (For context, read 15:11-32.)

This is from Jesus' parable that we call the prodigal son, but it could also be called "the loving father," for it's clear that the father in the story is a stand-in for God the Father. So here, too, Jesus is reinforcing the idea that God may be viewed in this more personal way.

But look at what happens to this father in the parable. First, this younger son of his treats him shabbily. Demanding his inheritance while his father is still living is the equivalent of treating his father as if he were dead. That was insulting. You don't usually get your inheritance until your parents have passed away. He wanted his rights without the accompanying responsibilities. There were arrangements in that day that allowed a father to distribute his holdings while still alive, but in such a case, the one receiving the inheritance was expected to care for the parents until their death. Basically, this son was telling his father, "Drop dead now!"

Second, this boy takes off and lives a life that defies all the values his father holds important.

Now think about what the father is feeling each day as he hears nothing from or about his son. What fears for his son sit like a rock in the pit of his stomach?

Finally, when the son comes crawling home in shame, the father does something no dignified Middle-Eastern father of that day normally would do: He runs to meet his son. This father has been watching down the road, Jesus tells us, and we gather that he's done this frequently. When he sees the boy, a long way off, he knows that the son will be humiliated by the taunts of his former friends and will be the object of village gossip. And so to spare the boy, he humiliates himself by running out to him and welcoming him home.

In telling us this story, one of the things Jesus shows us about God is that like a loving parent, God accepts the possibility that we, his children, will cause him pain. He accepts the fear factor inherent in fatherhood, and that there will be things from which he cannot protect us because we remove ourselves from his care.

It has become so commonplace to address God as Father that we may not notice what that tells us about the nature of God.

Questions: Remembering that there's an older son in this parable too (see vv. 25-32), which one of the two sons do you think would make the better father when they got older? Why? In what ways does the father in this parable serve as a model for your own parenting?

Hebrews 12:7-8

Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. (For context read 12:1-11.)

Within a family and in the context of rearing children, discipline -- making disciples of a sort -- is an inherent function. The context in Hebrews is of a father training his heir to become a good person. Note that this is not the "father-child" relationship typical of our culture, but one more of the head of a family or tribe and the person who will inherit the rights, duties, privileges and responsibilities. The passage notes that Christians are to become part of the family of God and in some manner, inherit sacredness from him.

As part of the preparation, discipline is involved. By its nature, discipline often requires pain and suffering in learning to avoid evil and to seek and do good. The evangelist tells us to treat hardship -- any hardship -- as discipline, where God is using the hardship in order to prepare us for eternal life with him.

Questions: How can a hardship, which may be unrelated to wrongdoing, help make us fit for eternal life? How does this attitude change the way we view troubles in this world?

1 Peter 1:17

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. (For context, read 1:13-25.)

The intimacy with God suggested by terms like Father and Abba was meaningful and helpful for the early Christians and has been for believers ever since. But that very closeness sometimes leads to viewing God in a one-sided way, and to forget that God still calls us to live a holy life.

This verse from 1 Peter reminds us that it is possible to take God too lightly. Peter is warning about the kind of thinking that excuses one's unholy behavior by saying something like, "Surely the loving Father wants me to be happy, so he won't blame me for this." Peter will have none of that, and so he writes that the Father is "the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds." Thus, says Peter, Christians should "live in reverent fear" of God, an expression meaning not terror, but deep respect.

Questions: How is holiness expressed at home? at work? in your neighborhood? Do you find it jarring to picture God as a loving Father who also judges us according to our deeds? What happens to our relationship with our parents when we take their love for granted? What happens to our relationship with God when we take his love for granted?

Mesh Peter's words here with Jesus' parable of the prodigal son and decide how the lessons of both fit together.

For Further Discussion

1. The parable of the prodigal son may connect for us on various levels, but one connection is that some of us may have, like the prodigal, told God to leave us alone and gone our own way. That's possible even if we bring ourselves to church regularly.

We have a sense of what it means to act like members of God's family, but we may not always do that. We may take what we want of the faith, but not practice some of the things Jesus explicitly said his followers should do -- like, for example, loving our enemies or doing unto others as we'd like them to do to us, or forgiving one another or being doers of the word and not just hearers, and so on. Or in some deeper ways we may be in rebellion against God or even harboring things we know to be sin. Thus, while we may not be outwardly like the prodigal, we may be in our heart.

But listen to this: After this father runs to his returning son, he embraces him and kisses him. Next, when the son tries to stammer out an apology, the father doesn't even let him finish it. And then, the father instructs his servants to prepare a feast for a welcome-home party.

All three of these actions are significant, and they are reflected in a nationwide poll from a few years ago that asked, "What word or phrase would you most like to hear uttered to you, sincerely?" The three phrases that polled the highest were "I love you," "You are forgiven" and "Supper's ready."

Discuss how the father in the parable effectively said all three of those things to his wayward son.

2. God the Father is one of the three persons in the Trinity. Christians worship God who has revealed himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those words in part draw power from the idealization of a family and the love within, while also hinting at something a family should aspire to. Bland Tucker captures this in his famous hymn. The first stanza proclaims,

*Our Father, by whose name
All fatherhood is known,
In love divine you claim
Each fam'ly as your own.*

The other stanzas refer to "O Christ, yourself a child within an earthly home" and pray "O Holy Spirit, bind our hearts in unity." Discuss how the Trinity is like a perfect family, and how the Trinity can be used to exhort a family to become more cohesive.

3. In Jesus' prayer in John 17, he addresses God as Father several times. Compare and contrast that chapter with the prayer commonly called the Lord's Prayer.

Responding to the News

If you haven't been praying to God as Father, this would be a good time to try it for a designated period of time and see how or if it deepens your spiritual life.

For a different response, write down as many names of God you can think of (or use the "Names of God" site in the link list above). Then write a prayer using a name of God you don't usually use to address him. If you are used to praying using the term "Father," see what happens if you address God as "Shepherd," or "Your Majesty" or "Light" or "Provider" or "Creator" or "Wonderful Counselor," etc. How does the content of prayer change, depending on how you address God?

Prayer

We suggest you pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Other News This Week

Bored Computer Programmer Designs App to 'Randomize' His Life to Discover What He's Been Missing

In the News

Millennial computer geek Max Hawkins had what many might consider a dream career in Silicon Valley, with stints at Apple, YouTube and Google, yet increasingly felt trapped in his perfectly organized life. He had a sense of *déjà vu*, he said, "like I was reading a story that I'd read before or I was playing out someone else's script."

At a time when technology increasingly recommends products, movies, music, friends, groups, activities, restaurants, etc., based on our personal preferences, editing out web content some algorithm has determined would not interest us, Hawkins wanted to experience a world unfiltered by his past choices, likes and dislikes.

"I just started thinking about these loops that we get into," he said. "And about how the structure of your life ... completely determines what happens in it." He wanted to discover the world outside his own "bubble."

So Hawkins began designing apps that would add the element of surprise to his life. First, he created an app that hailed an Uber car to take him to an unknown location he would only discover when he arrived at his destination.

Then he built an app using Facebook to find and randomly select public events nearby for him to attend. The algorithm suggested random activities Hawkins might never have considered before, often with people he might never otherwise have met. Most hosts welcomed him, intrigued by the idea that he was intentionally seeking out new experiences.

"A random algorithm ... has its own different idea," the innovator said. "You're taking on the computer's view of the world, and because that's not human, it's likely to be completely different from your own."

Then Hawkins added another layer to the adventure by creating an app that selected places for him to live, travel and eat. For two years, he followed the algorithm's direction to Germany, Slovenia, India, Vietnam, central Iowa, the United Arab Emirates and elsewhere, using the Facebook events app to find random activities within his price range to sample. He went to a socialists' rally, a graduation party, a meeting of Russian bloggers, an acroyoga activity (combining acrobatics with yoga). His new experiences began to change the way he viewed the world.

In his effort to "randomize" his life, Hawkins did bump into some limits of AI (artificial intelligence), which sometimes recommended tame, ordinary or unpleasant experiences. Bots ("robots" that interact with users of technology), he discovered, are not always very smart. When he and a friend visited Japan, for example, the app kept trying to send them to restaurants that had no Japanese food.

Still, Hawkins said, "a lot of times ... it would take us to a place and we would get something that we didn't even know we needed ... when a randomized algorithm tells you things to do, it helps break you out of [habits] where what you do informs who you are and who you are in turn informs what you should be doing."

Hawkins has designed other apps to expand the experiences of users, including a Spotify playlist that provides 30 new songs selected at random every day, a random diet club that one member jokingly said "eliminates one food at random from your diet per week until you can no longer eat," and an app that calls subscribers up in the wee hours of the morning, pairing them up anonymously to discuss their dreams or whatever interests them as long as they want to talk.

"It's only by loosening your grip on your preferences and your idea of what you should be doing that you can open yourself up to things that are outside of your bubble," Hawkins remarked.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Eager to Burst His Own Bubble, a Techie Made Apps to Randomize His Life. NPR](#)
[Max Hawkins Twitter Feed. Twitter](#)

[Max Hawkins: About Me. Max Hawkins website](#)

[Call in the Night: A Collaborative Nighttime Art Experiment. Call in the Night](#)
[This Dinner Party Invites People of All Faiths to Break Bread Together. NPR](#)

The Big Questions

1. Do you ever feel "like you are reading a story that you've read before or that you are playing out someone else's script"? That you have a seemingly perfect but fairly predictable life that leaves you unsatisfied? What leads to boredom in a person's life, and how does your faith speak to that experience?
2. How have you dealt with boredom in your spiritual life in the past, in unhelpful ways? In helpful ways?
3. Would you want to try any of the apps Hawkins designed? Why or why not?
4. What habits, conveniences or preferences do you have that hinder or prevent you from stepping out of your own bubble to follow where Jesus is leading?
5. Someone once said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans for the future." Have you ever felt that God "randomized" your life at some point, taking you places you might never have gone, to do something you might never have done, with people you might never have met otherwise? If so, what do you think was God's purpose in shaking up your normal routine?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

John 21:18-19

"Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me." (For context, read 21:15-19.)

After Jesus rose from the dead, he took time to recommission Peter, who had denied the Lord the night of his arrest. He didn't sugarcoat the future, but told his disciple the truth: that one day he would be held captive and suffer death for God's glory.

Hawkins discovered that the app he created to randomize his life didn't always give him experiences he liked. He was willing to accept the bad with the good, however.

When we follow Jesus, we are not guaranteed a bed of roses and a life of ease: quite the contrary! Instead, Jesus says we should expect persecution (Matthew 5:10, 12; Mark 10:30; John 15:20, 16:33).

Questions: Why would anyone follow Jesus, knowing the hardship that may lie ahead? Why do you choose to follow him?

2 Corinthians 5:17

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! (For context, read 5:14-17.)

The English translation of this verse doesn't quite capture what Paul actually wrote here. He is so excited about the new reality in which the Christian lives, that he says, "So if anyone is in Christ: NEW CREATION!" We sometimes use the term "pass away" as a synonym for "die." God cannot give us a new way of life without first shaking up our old way of thinking, feeling and acting. Only when the old "dies" is resurrection possible.

Questions: What patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting need to die or change in your life before you can fully experience the new life God wants to birth in you? Where have you already experienced transformation by the power of the resurrection at work in you?

Luke 1:38

Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her. (For context, read 1:26-38.)

When the angel of the Lord appeared to Mary to inform her that she had been chosen to give birth to the Messiah, Mary "was greatly troubled" (v. 29) but voiced only one question: "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (v. 34)

We don't know how much of the angel's explanation Mary understood. The incarnation has mystified brilliant minds for centuries. But when she heard that her cousin Elizabeth was pregnant in her old age, she accepted the word of the Lord.

Mary was ready to serve in whatever way the Lord deemed appropriate, even though so much of the future was suddenly unclear. Would Joseph still want to marry her when he learned that she was going to have a child? What would her parents and neighbors think? Would she be thrown out of the synagogue, shunned, or worse? Whatever questions may have lingered in her mind, she left in the Lord's hands, trusting that "where God guides, God will provide."

Questions: When, if ever, have you felt God calling you to a mission that troubled or mystified you? How did you respond? What questions did you have for God?

If God were to call you to a mission that you didn't understand, about which you felt anxious, what questions would you want God to answer? How would you respond if God didn't give you answers that you could understand? Would you be able to "trust and obey" even though you couldn't see the future clearly? Why or why not?

Acts 9:17-19

So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your

sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. (For context, read 9:10-19.)

After the Lord met Saul on the road to Damascus, when Saul was struck blind, he called his disciple Ananias in a vision, telling him to go to Saul to restore his sight.

Ananias understandably wondered whether he had heard the Lord correctly. After all, he had heard how much harm Saul had done to Jesus' followers in Jerusalem, and knew that Saul had the authority to arrest Jesus' disciples in Damascus as well. But the Lord reiterated his command to go to Saul, adding that he had chosen Saul "to proclaim his name," for which he would suffer greatly.

So Ananias put aside his well-founded fear and obeyed. Both men gained new vision that day: Saul's eyes were literally opened, and Ananias came to see that God has power to transform even a murderous terrorist into a missionary who would love the church he had once persecuted. Ananias found a brother in Christ, and Saul was accepted into the church: each a miracle at least as profound as the restoration of sight to the blind.

As time permits, watch this [video](#) of mime Mike Rymer performing Ken Medema's song "Sitting by the Window Praying," in which Mike acts out the story in the text.

Questions: How would you describe the bubble in which Saul lived before his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus? What about the bubble in which Ananias lived before God spoke to him in a vision?

Which do you think was the greatest miracle: the healing of Saul's eyes, Saul's conversion, or Ananias' ability to accept Saul as a brother? Explain your answer.

Exodus 3:4, 7, 10

When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." ... Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings ... So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." (For context, read Exodus 3:1-15; 4:13.)

After God got Moses' attention by showing him a bush that burned without being destroyed, he told him to go to Egypt to deliver his people from slavery. One might think that seeing something miraculous would inspire enthusiasm for the mission God had in mind, but Moses asked to be excused (4:13), even after God had assured him that he would provide all the resources he needed for the mission. Eventually, Moses did obey, but not before having a major argument with the Almighty. You can hear a dramatic portrayal of the encounter in this [video](#) of Ken Medema's song "Moses. "

Questions: What keeps you from full-blown, total commitment to following after God wherever he may lead? What do you need to hear from God to convince you to leave your former way of life behind to obey his voice?

For Further Discussion

1. The desire to understand people beyond his own culture led African-American comedian W. Kamau Bell to create the CNN documentary series "United Shades of America." Bell visited a Ku Klux Klan flag-burning ceremony, a prison, a mosque and a shooting range, speaking with the Standing Rock Native American protesters, gang members, white supremacists, law enforcement officers, people who live "off the grid" and others he wouldn't normally encounter in a typical day. What might be the goal of making visits like this? Where would you need to go, with whom, to do what activity, to really break out of your bubble or your comfort zone?

2. Lebanese Omar Salha started Open Iftar in 2011 when he was a graduate student in London. Concerned that some Muslim students far from home might have no one to break their fast with during the holy month of Ramadan, he invited them to share the meal together in a park.

Last year, people gathered in Portland, Oregon, for the first Open Iftar ever held in the United States. This year, over 600 people attended that event, some to support the Muslim community which was reeling from the murder of two people who stood up to anti-Muslim violence less than 24 hours before. Some had never met or conversed with a Muslim or visited a mosque before. As people of various backgrounds stepped out of their own bubbles, they began to get acquainted over a feast, "to come closer to our community," said Salha. "And becoming closer to our community means we are becoming closer to God as well."

What would happen if Christians showed up in places we don't normally go, such as at a mosque, a synagogue, a bar, a prison, a nursing home, with no agenda except to shine the light of Christ wherever we are, to be salt on the food of the world to make people thirsty for God? How should Christians prepare for such visits?

Responding to the News

1. If you have been feeling like your spiritual life is in a rut, you might want to review the eight practical steps to getting "unstuck" in this article entitled "[So You're in a Rut. Now What?](#)" Or check out [Prayer: Are You Stuck in a Rut?](#) for tips on how to revitalize your prayer life.

2. If you suspect that your church is stuck in a rut, living in a bubble that isolates you from the world around you, brainstorm (within your group and with objective observers beyond your membership) ways you could engage with the world beyond the walls of your building. Choose one new thing to do in the community every month for a year. Keep notes, and evaluate your experience afterward. What did you learn about yourselves? About your community? About God's desire for you?

3. A word describing random encounters producing unexpected blessing is "serendipity." The lack of such encounters is one common complaint about online booksellers. Perhaps something similar to Hawkins' application would partially bring back that experience. Discuss how you have benefitted from unsought, seemingly random, encounters.

4. You may choose to sing the song "[Here I Am, Lord](#)" as a prayer, opening yourself up to be led by God into the world Christ died to save. [Here](#) is another version.

Prayer

Lord, we confess that all too often we hesitate to respond to you when you call us to follow you, and then we complain that we are bored or stuck in a rut. Forgive us for our lack of trust in you. Lead us to greater faith that is expressed in acts of willing obedience, for the honor and glory of your great name. Amen.

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Attachments area

Preview YouTube video Mike Rymer, Mime, Sitting by the window praying, CCWC



Preview YouTube video "Moses" - Ken Medema in concert at Azusa Pacific University 3/18/13



