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Characteristics of Life

Recently someone asked me, what is life? Some years ago I asked the same question. In the last chapter we defined “life,” but now we will look at four characteristics of life I learned years ago from Dr. Norman Vincent Peale¹⁵ and Dr. Paul Tournier.¹⁶ Through them, I began to see what it meant to be fully alive, and to accept the many fluctuations that came with actually living my life.

1) Life Is Movement

First of all, we need to recognize that life is movement, the breaking of the fixed line. We must never think of life as static or immovable!

This is one of the errors scientists made when they thought our universe was actually fixed. It took them many centuries – actually not until 1924 – to discover that the universe is not fixed but is always expanding and enlarging. Even the stars and galaxies are moving farther and farther away from each other as our universe expands.

If we look, we can see this movement all around us – in our planet, in the plants, in the animals, and in us. Nothing stays the same.

There is movement and change, as everything grows from one stage to another. Think with me about watching the movement of a toddler. They are seldom still. Their little legs or arms are going constantly.

Movement in nature

- The cyclic fashion of the moon and sun – moon journeys across night sky, waxing and waning; sun journeys across the day, marks seasons & measures the years.
- The cyclic fashion of the year – winter, spring, summer, autumn.
- The cyclic fashion of sowing and reaping.

¹⁵ Dr. Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1983) was an American minister and author who is best known for his work in popularizing the concept of positive thinking, especially through his best-selling book *The Power of Positive Thinking*. He served as pastor of Marble Collegiate Church in New York City from 1932 until 1984. He was a friend to many presidents of the United States.

¹⁶ Dr. Paul Tournier (1898-1986) was a Swiss physician and author who acquired a worldwide audience for his work in pastoral counseling. His ideas had a significant impact on the spiritual and psychosocial aspects of patient care. He has been called the twentieth century's most famous Christian physician. He authored more than 30 books including *The Healing of Persons*, *The Meaning of Persons*, *The Adventure of Living*, *Creative Suffering*, etc.

- The cyclic fashion of rains – the early and the latter rains or the rainy season and the drought or dry season.

For us to stay fully alive requires us to keep moving forward in some way, not allowing ourselves to fixate at a certain point, getting stuck there. This includes you and me too!

There are people who go on indefinitely preparing for life instead of living it. – Paul Tournier¹⁷

Need to keep moving physically

In health care, we learned the importance of keeping people moving. Back in the early 60s it wasn't that way. We kept people in bed for many days following surgery. Today we know better. If you have had recent surgery like I did, you were pushed to get up the same day, no matter how much it hurt – and just now, I need to remind myself to get up from the computer and move around a bit.

Life is always in a state of flow, one way or another. – N. Peale¹⁸

We all know the benefits of taking a walk, or doing some physical activity.

Movement in our daily life

Dr. Tournier explains that we experience two types of movement in our daily lives: “One is automatic, recurrent, lasting, causal, or physical. The other is creative, unique, instantaneously purposive, metaphysical, and inaccessible to scientific observation.”

For an example of an automatic or recurrent movement, just think about what you do as soon as you get up or just before you go to bed. For me, in the morning I always have my coffee in my rocking chair and in the evening, I brush my teeth. Or consider what your weekly schedule looks like. Getting up, going to work, etc. Pretty routine, I am sure.

The metaphysical movement is more interesting and vital to our life. Sometimes when I feel down, unable to focus my energy, or oppressed, I will ask my husband to pray for me. Soon after his prayer, I usually experience a shift taking place in my mood, and I am able to get on with my work that day. We call this an influx of divine grace.

Or perhaps we are asking God to give us guidance about something, then an idea suddenly pops into our mind that provides us with an answer. Or someone else speaks a word of wisdom, a word of knowledge, or a prophetic word to us – one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit – that changes our direction in life.

☞ *Have you benefited from one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit?*

¹⁷ Tournier, *The Adventure of Living*

¹⁸ Norman Vincent Peale

Movement in our spiritual life

In our Sacred Text, we learn about the New Covenant, about being led in a new and different way. It also mentions “newness of life” and “I will make all things new.” This implies change and movement.

↳ *So what do these words mean to you?*

Our Creator God promises us that, if we allow it, if we go to him, He will cause something new to happen inside of us. Old things will begin to pass away, and everything will become new. Our values, our habits, our thoughts and attitudes, our words, our desires, etc. begin to change.

- We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).
- Behold I will do something new; Now it will spring forth; Will you not be aware of it? I will make a roadway in the wilderness, Rivers in the dessert (Isaiah 41:19).
- And He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new’ (Revelation 21:6).

We must choose through our faith in daily life to either partner with God through Christ or with the evil forces all around us. We do this with our thoughts, words, and actions.

Transformation is movement toward wholeness. It is an unfolding of the self that moves us toward being at one within our self and with God—Benner¹⁹

Pilgrim or settler?

What is the difference between a pilgrim and a settler? Movement! A pilgrim keeps on moving, is eager to learn, and totally dedicated to the journey. Dr. Peace²⁰ describes it as “a single-minded pursuit of a significant goal which is undertaken because the person is called to it.” He adds, “It will take them their lifetime, but offers them great rewards.”

The hero’s journey is often another name used for the pilgrim’s journey. Briefly, the hero’s journey involves someone who goes on an adventure, is victorious in a decisive crisis, and comes home changed or transformed. They go out from their normal world in search of a lost home or a better country – Jerusalem above? (Gal 4:26).

The hero yearns to know and understand in deeper ways, to widen the range of his or her experiences. Some years ago, I was deeply moved by Disney’s movie, *Finding Nemo*, because it was allegorically speaking, a portrayal of a hero’s journey.

Thinking about the settler for a moment more, we discover settlers are people who, for one reason or another, have accepted a set of boundaries for their life which defines and limits the extent of their spiritual growth. Settlers like things just the way they are –

¹⁹ Dr. David Benner (1947-) is an internationally known psychologist, a spiritual guide, and a transformation coach who has authored more than twenty books, including *Care of Souls* (1998) and *Spirituality and the Awakening Self* (2012).

²⁰ Dr. Richard Peace (1933-) is an author and theologian who was a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. His specialty was spiritual formation. He published *Pilgrimage: A Handbook on Christian Growth* (1976) and numerous other books.

comfortable and predictable: A nice safe place to spend their whole lifetime. But they don't recognize the cost they are paying for living on the surface of their faith, for failing to claim the riches of their inheritance in Christ, and the price of experiencing sheer boredom.

↳ *Who do you relate more to: The Settler or the Pilgrim?*

Remember how God asked Abraham to leave his home and his relatives in Ur at age 75, and move to a land that God would show him (Gen 12). That took faith! Logically this makes no sense. People with families and responsibilities do not generally set forth into the unknown on the prompting of their God, particularly without knowing where they are heading. But Abraham did exactly that. He agreed to follow his God on a journey that would leave him and the world forever changed. The end result was the founding of a new nation, Israel (Heb. 11:8-10,16).

My husband and I are radically different people, but in our 63 years together we have shared one thing in common: we are both pilgrims at heart.

The image of the spiritual wanderer is one who has "no place to lay his head"—no earthly reference point to which he can turn for his identity. Such a person can now experience himself as a son of God. No longer being identified with the collective world or his culture, he can for the first time know what the sonship of God means. – John A Sanford²¹

↳ *Do you want to become a pilgrim?*

- ❖ It is often through pain that we are really forced into a spiritual journey: we are looking for some relief from the pain or heartache or to make our life more full and complete. This was true in our lives.

2) Life Is Rhythm

Second, we need to understand that we will experience all kinds of rhythms in life. This is normal! We can see this in oceans, music, and personalities. For example, in oceans the tidal waters will rise and fall in a predictable and measurable rhythm due to the gravitational pulls of the moon and sun. But remember, the tidal rhythms are affected by the currents flowing at that time. Currents cause the ocean water to move in a specific direction, often with help from the wind.

Sometimes we are aware that we have lost our rhythm. Actually this happened to many people during the recent plague that attacked the world.

↳ *How did the rhythm of your life change during the virus? What kind of music did you dance to? The blues, the jitterbug, or even the dirge? Probably not the tango or waltz.*

²¹ Author John A. Sanford (1929- 2005) was an American Jungian analyst and Episcopal Priest: *The Kingdom Within*, p. 89.

↳ *What did you do to restore your balance?*

Losing our rhythm

Sometimes we can lose our rhythm, because the winds of life have radically shifted too fast for us to adjust. Things like war, divorce, disease, plague, floods, fires, death, loss of job, bankruptcy, and even our children getting married or moving out on their own, can do this to us.

↳ *What causes you to lose your rhythm in life?*

In the Old Testament, King Solomon prepared us for this when he said there is a time for every event under the sun.

- A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot what was planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh (Eccl 3:1-8).

If we can see that our personality is not meant to be static and unchanging, we will not get too upset and we will know what to do about it. It is impossible to set our personality like we do a radio channel and it will stay there. Doesn't work; I tried it!

Life is like a bursting forth of life; not like tuning into a radio station and setting it. – P. Tournier

Many people try to live by a set of standards or ideals they have created for themselves or learned from their culture. They are trying to get an "A" grade in something! Or they want to prove themselves, or please someone. This creates great tension within them when they can't keep their standards or ideals.

↳ *Why do we try to get "As"?*

In my own experience, I was bound by legalism until the Lord opened my eyes to see it. Look at what the Sacred Scriptures tell us:

- The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law (1 Cor: 15:56).
- For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law (Gal 3:21).
- For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Gal 2:19-21).

If you recognize that you are doing it, you will notice that you are losing your peace. Dr. Walther Lechler²² taught his patients that negative symptoms are gifts from God, because they alert us to the fact that we are going off the rails.

The best way I know to restore my peace is to repent from my dead works and put my faith in God and his power. And humble myself and go to Our Heavenly Father and ask for His grace and tell him I will wait until it comes. God does not lie!

- Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in the time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

We need time to adjust

In recent decades there has been a rapid increase of anxiety problems – obsessions, compulsions, phobias, panic attacks, generalized anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress, etc. – as people are trying to cope with the increased stress in their lives.

A few years ago, I read that our environment and social order have changed more in the last 40 years than in the previous 300 years. The increased pace of modern society and the increased rate of technological change alone have deprived people of adequate time to adjust to these changes.

And more recently we have been faced with a barrage of inconsistent views about the plague that has covered the world. Nobody knows who or what to believe. Left without reliable information, it becomes our individual responsibility to decide what to do and what to believe.

On a personal level, my husband and I often felt overwhelmed as we navigated a recent move into a new home. Before we could move in, we needed to make many decisions very quickly: color of the walls, types of flooring, style of lights, and even what kind of toilet should we buy – too many choices! Thank God we could look to Him for His grace and guidance! We did it, and a few months later, we were pleased with our choices.

The good news is that God has created us with the ability to readjust the tensions of our personality. This is God's gift to us – if we know how to use it.

As I think of friends who have lost their life partners and have to try to figure out life alone, my heart goes out to them. But they do not need to get stuck in depression or despair, because I know the Lord Jesus is more than enough – if we go to Him with our whole heart!

Consider what an Old Testament prophet said about those who mourn:

- To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness (Isaiah 61:3).

A few hours ago, I felt myself getting a little too stressed out, a little too wound up, so I went into another room and had a chat with my Heavenly Father and asked for his

²² Walther Lechler (1923-2013) was a German psychiatrist who pioneered holistic treatment for troubled people called the Bad Herrenalber model and co-authored with American, Jackie Lair, *I Need, I Exist, I'm Entitled*. He founded Förderkreis für Holheitsmedizin.

grace. In a very few minutes, my soul let go of its distress and my body relaxed. Feeling refreshed, I got up and went back to my work.

↳ *What do you do to adjust the tensions of your personality?*

We can learn to do what Jesus tells us to do: go to Him

- You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life (John 5:39-40).

↳ *What kind of music are you dancing to now? Rock, pop, classical, country, blues, jazz, waltz, hip hop, dirge ... ?*

3) Life Is Creative

Here is the third characteristic of life: life is creative in our unseen self and it is original. In other words, the life within us needs a way to be expressed and released.

A few weeks ago I dreamed that I needed to make a scrapbook for myself. I instantly became wide awake, feeling excited about this idea. Why? I don't know, but when I receive info from my dream world, I tend to take it seriously.

God was the first creator

When God created the world, He created a beautiful garden for us to live in, which we are told was 'good.' Even though sin has spoiled much of it, we can get a glimpse of the beauty of what God created in the first place. Just look at photos taken by the astrophysicists with their new telescopes of the expanding universe to get a sense of the beauty God created.

We can look further at the things our eyes can see—the poinsettia plants, the tulips, the transparent green wings of a grasshopper, the gnarled cypress of the California coast, the varied patterns of clouds, and the breath-taking beauty of a full moon.

But our creativity is not on God's level at all. His creativity is unlimited and infinite. Nevertheless, we have been created in His image, so we can be, and are made to be, creative.

- For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him (Colossians 1:16).

Creativity in nature

Many years ago there was a man named Wilson Bentley. As a child, he loved to run outside in a snowstorm and catch falling snowflakes. Staying true to his childhood passion, Bentley photographed 5,381 snowflakes during his lifetime. He said: "Under the microscope, I found that snowflakes were miracles of beauty ... Every crystal was a

masterpiece of design and *no one design was ever repeated*. When the snowflake melted, ... that much beauty was gone, without leaving any record behind.”²³

Nothing is as important as knowing yourself and how to use your God-given unique creative capacities. It is the foundation for living your life in harmony with your intrinsic nature – penguins can't fly like a duck; pond lilies don't grow in desert sand; cactus do not grow in a mill pond; and polar bears can't survive in the jungle. So it is vital that we discover the environment we thrive in and put our creative talents to use.

Recently I met a lovely woman, who continues to write poetry in her later years. Here is what she wrote in her recent book:

In 1958, as a junior in college, I wrote my first poem to meet an assignment from my professor. It introduced me to a part of myself. — Ginny Emery²⁴

In my groups, I like to ask people to choose a musical instrument to symbolize who they are – your intrinsic nature. I've heard everything from violins, tubas, harps, pianos, trumpets, and trombones. But I chose the drum – because it sets the beat. This is why I enjoy facilitating groups.

Creativity in our environments

Our environments are important. What kind of environment did your family create for you to grow up in? How did it affect you? What was the atmosphere in your home? I am not talking about creating new art, but to draw our attention to an old truth: we are an art form that affects and involves other people.

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I grew up as the eldest daughter of a fisherman. When I was a small child, Saturday nights were a time for Dad's family of fishermen to get together – the uncle and aunt, the unmarried great-uncles, and my unmarried great-aunt. Beer and laughter would flow as stories were shared. How many pounds did we catch? What about those fish livers? What price is so and so selling perch for, do you think? Will the good weather hold?

The Second World War was raging. My Mother's brother was killed in the Battle of the Bulge. That Christmas I received a package from him. Inside was a little pink silk hanky with an emblem of Paris on it and a little wooden soldier for my brother – but the telegraph of his death arrived before the package! I listened as my Grandmother screamed out her pain at the loss of her only son.

As a child, I colored my world dark and gray.

But in my 30s, after I experienced a living God, I began to blossom. I went to the library and found books to help me learn how to bring color into our home. I discovered Edith

²³Taken from Mark Batterson's (1969 –) book, *Wild Goose Chase*. He is an American pastor and author who serves as lead pastor of National Community Church in Washington, D.C., which was recognized as one of the most innovative and influential churches in America by Outreach in 1913. His book, *Wild Goose Chase*, is for Christ followers, especially postmoderns in the 20-40 age range, who are tired of a formulaic, rules-driven approach to God's will.

²⁴ Ginny Emery's book of poetry, *Giving*, won the Illumination Book Awards in 2019.

Schaffer's book, *Hidden Art*,²⁵ and learned about the importance of creativity. I still treasure her book, and it is here in front of me as I am writing now. Edith is long dead, but her truths live on in my heart.

By the way, my world is no longer colored gray, but a multitude of colors, especially red, white, and blue!

↳ *How did you color your world as a child?*

Sudden insights & revelations

Another way we experience this creative life within us is through insight or revelation. Sometimes, when a spiritual insight explodes into our conscious self, it touches us so powerfully that we just cannot sit still. We spontaneously feel we have to get up and "run around the hut" so to speak (not sure where that metaphor comes from).

As believers, we can expect to experience fresh creative acts that continually resurge in the secret depths of our innermost being – sometimes through dreams in the night or a sudden creative idea that drops into our mind out of nowhere. Sometimes these sudden insights come because we heard God speak to us.

When my husband left his career, he had no idea of what he could do to earn money, but kept trusting the Lord. One day, as he was driving the car, a sudden thought entered his mine: he could become a writer. And he did! He acted on the word of the Lord and over the years he did it.

These intermittent explosions will break up our tendency toward fixation – the law of entropy. Just as Dr. Tournier said, "Every creative event with resurgence of life upsets the established order of the routine."

Life is a living, spiritual event, born from a bursting forth of life; a positive choosing of a new direction – P. Tournier.

↳ *Note what Tournier just said: "Life is a living, spiritual event!" Do you agree with this?*

Dreams offer a burst of life

Fourth century Greek Church giant, John Chrysostom, believed that dreams are one potential – and frequently used – source of revelation from the Lord. He even suggested dreams are sufficient if we are finely tuned to God – we don't need visions and other dramatic divine revelations. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, believed that the dream gives revelation of the spiritual world and is an indication of how very close to God one can be.

²⁵ Edith Schaffer (1914- 2013) co-founded with her renown husband, Francis Schaeffer, L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland. L'Abri (a French word for shelter) is a residential study center where individuals have the opportunity to seek answers to honest questions about God and the significance of human life. They believe that Christianity speaks to all aspects of life. Today there are branches of L'Abri on almost every continent. Edith was a prolific Christian author (*L'Abri, Hidden Art, What Is a Family?*) who contributed greatly on the subject of family values in Christian living.

Because God is the source of our dreams, they often contain great power, capable of restoring and renewing us in our entire being. They provide us spiritual and psychological liveliness we never knew existed.

In our experience, dreams often impart divine energy to us, because they contain a *living* Word – in picture form – from God. By experiencing the release of God’s divine energy through our dreams, we can be transformed in the way we see ourselves and the world around us.

Our dreams can bring together the fractured pieces of our conflicted, divided heart. Help us complete an unfinished project. Provide additional enthusiasm to tackle new activities. Release divine creativity within us – discoveries and inventions have sometimes come through dreams.

Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties – Erich Fromm²⁶.

Spirituality calls for creativity

Edith Schaffer writes, “A Christian above all people should live artistically, aesthetically, and creatively. If we have been created in the image of an Artist, then we should look for expressions of artistry, and be sensitive to beauty, responsive for what has been created for our appreciation. The fact that we are believers should show in some practical area of a growing creativity and sensitivity to beauty, rather than in a gradual drying up of creativity, and a blindness to ugliness.”

This is why we all need to do something that uses our creativity. For example, making a meal can be a creative act, so can setting a table, redecorating a room or making quilts. The same with gardening, writing poetry, painting, sketching, knitting, photography, event-coordination, building something, or making music.

❖ Research shows the positive influence of hobbies on our well-being. As you grow older, be sure you have developed a hobby that you can do in your later years.

For me, I like to facilitate a small group, and write study notes and books, because it calls forth my capacity to create. In my groups, I often receive a sudden idea: like the time I invited individuals to stand in a dark room, and open the door and walk toward the bright sun light coming from the outside open door. I asked them to stop when they began to feel a resistance to the light. It was incredible how this spontaneous experiential learning activity revealed one person’s fear of the light, and in another, her fear of darkness.

↳ ***What do you do that is creative?***

When I facilitate my groups, I often experience a burst of life as I do them. So too with my writing. I like to write, simply because it does something for me.

²⁶ Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*

The Christian should be the person who is alive, whose imagination absolutely boils, which moves, which produces something a bit different from God's world because God made us to be creative. – Francis Schaeffer²⁷

4) Life Is the Emanation of A Vital (*Spiritual*) Force

The fourth characteristic of life has something to do with the spiritual dimension. Dr. Peale described life as the emanation of a vital force, of a power at work beyond science. Swiss physician Tournier sees life as coming from a spiritual dimension: “Life is of a spiritual order, an idea, a vital drawing, a creative consciousness. Life is an impulse, a force coming from another metaphysical sphere.”

Life is a mystery, creative, unique, instantaneous, purposive, metaphysical, and inaccessible to scientific observation – P. Tournier.

Healing atmosphere

Earlier I mentioned my experiences in a German clinic where I witnessed a powerful environment that enabled patients to receive healing and become more alive – life was flowing. I had never felt such an alive ambience in any place before – not the hospitals or nursing homes I worked in or the churches I had attended. I was curious to know the why.

During my internship in his clinic, Dr. Lechler said to me, “The people who come to us for help are our guests, not patients. We work to fill the walls of our clinic with their life.”²⁸ So on Wednesdays, we took long hikes in the mountains, sometimes wading through snow higher than my knees, and on Saturday nights we danced.

The Christian is the one whose imagination should fly beyond the stars. – Francis A. Schaeffer²⁹

One other thing I discovered was the spiritual element of their work. Mentored by Dr. Paul Tournier, Lechler had discovered that his patients could get not better unless “they had a healthy dialogue with a loving Heavenly Father.” So as a psychiatrist, Lechler talked to his guests about God or the Bible.

Yet in our Western culture we are afraid to talk about God or our spiritual experiences with Him. It is okay to talk about the healing power of rocks, aromas, and oils, but not the healing power of God.

²⁷ Schaffer, Francis, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*.

²⁸ German psychiatrist Walther H. Lechler (1923-2013), *Personal communication*, Bad Herrenalb Klinik, Germany (1988).

²⁹ Schaffer, Francis, *Art & the Bible*.

Experiencing the presence of God

Have you ever been in a Christian gathering and become aware of the presence of God, something greater than yourself in the room? What do you think of the following research by Andrew Greely?³⁰

Sociologist Father Andrew Greely says 40% of adults report they have been in the presence of something larger than themselves that lifted them outside of themselves.

Sitting beside my son in his hospital room, I suddenly was aware of the presence of God moving into the room. I jumped up and stood by our son and watched as his breath peacefully left him. A week later, as I flew home from his burial, I was meditating on a prayer St. Paul prayed in Ephesians 3 about knowing the love of Christ, when suddenly I experienced a cloud of love dropping down on me and filling me up on the inside.

↳ *How have you experienced something larger than yourself?*

Summary description of what is life

Let's think about how you would summarize what you have learned about life so far. Here is Norman Vincent Peale's take on it:

"Life is vitality, energy, freedom, growth, and dynamism. It is a deep sense of well-being. It is the elimination of all feelings of deadness and desultoriness. It is to be fully vital and vigorous. It is a useful participation in worthwhile activities. It is the satisfaction of creating something, giving something, doing something."

↳ *How would you summarize what you have learned about life?*

My Story

Because we are made in the image of God, we contain immense energy deep within us. By transforming the dynamic energy in our unconscious into images and symbols while we sleep, our dreams can guide us and re-energize us for living.

Dream calls me to a hero's journey

At one point in my spiritual journey, I dreamt I was launching my rubber raft and going to Australia, no matter who came with me. But before I could get there, I had to make a stop in Nigeria. The dream gave me remarkable understanding of what the Spirit of God was guiding me to see.

Everything in my dream is a symbol: the voyage of the night sea. Australia symbolized "the land down under" the land within me residing below consciousness: the

³⁰ Father Andrew Greely (1928-2013) was an American Catholic priest, sociologist, and a research associate with the National Opinion Research Center.

unconscious one could say. Nigeria is located in what we know as the Dark Continent; this is why I had to visit there; I needed the Spirit of God to show me things about myself that I was blind to.

After some years on my journey, I asked God how did He want me to see myself now. Remember, when I began my spiritual quest I saw myself like an empty box.

So on this day, I was helping a group of people do this activity for themselves – an experiential learning activity. I ask them to first set their mind on God, and image a clean white board or a white sheet hanging down in front of them. Then we pray, “Lord God, please show us how you want us to see our self.”

Immediately, I saw a lovely treasure chest packed full of beautiful gems. WOW! I understood the Lord was showing me that he had answered my prayer: I was no longer like an empty box. I keep a tiny treasure chest on my bookcase as a reminder of what did in changing me.

One day I did this learning activity with my men’s group. My husband was in it. I asked them first to draw a picture of how they saw themselves. One man drew an outhouse, my husband, a saw, a tool that cuts up things. Then we asked God to show them how He sees them. With tears in his eyes, my husband drew a star, shining in the night sky.

Dreams renew divine life in me

Many years ago, I dreamed I was on a stage, leading a Christian meeting.

A spiritual man comes up to me and teaches me how to release the anointing of the Holy Spirit in the meeting. When I did what he showed me, the Holy Spirit came down like a bolt of lightning and knocked me to the floor. Right in the dream, I received an inflow of the life of God like I never had before.

At the time, I’d been asking the Lord to touch me afresh with his Holy Spirit, to give me a fresh anointing of his power for the ministry He had given me.

Reflection Points

- ◆ What will you take away from this chapter?
- ◆ Make a definite decision on whether or not you want to become a pilgrim.
- ◆ Reflect on this: “You have to live and you might as well start now.” (Bodie Thone)

Your Response

- ⇒ Do you need to decide to live your life?
- ⇒ Do you feel you are moving forward in life? Or do you feel stuck?
- ⇒ What do you need to do to get unstuck?
- ⇒ Write a letter to God telling him why you need to become a pilgrim. If you cannot say yes, then explain to God why you need more time to decide.

- ⇒ Draw a picture to capture the meaning of the word “life” to you. Life is like this ...
- ⇒ Ask God for a picture or image to complete this sentence: I am like ... Draw out this picture or image.
- ⇒ Write a poem to the Creator, like King David did in Psalm 145 or 138.