

# Searching for the Sacred

Sixty Meditations  
on Faith, Hope, & Love

Cameron Trimble



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*To Rev. Dr. James McCormick,  
who taught me to love*

*good theology,  
big questions,  
and resilient hope.*



# Introduction

You may have picked up this book simply because you were looking for a new devotional to start or end your day. Perhaps the title or the cover grabbed you. Wonderful! I hope you find in this book stories and parables that give you hope, insight, courage, and resilience.

You might also have picked up this book because you have a sense, as I do, that we are living between times. Something is at stake in our evolution, in our awakening, as never before. We are living at the end of one era and the beginning of another, one marked by some of the greatest challenges humankind has ever faced. We walk into a future shaped by global warming, mass migration, the extinction of millions of species, political unrest, the acceleration of technology, the globalization of economies, and the unweaving of institutions that have shaped our lives for generations.

But we also walk into a future open to a new kind of spiritual consciousness, an awakening to our interdependence with one another and all of creation. That connection, which has always been present, now invites each of us to imagine the world we could build together should we have the will and the courage to do so. Ours is an era of unprecedented change, the most radical deconstruction and reconstruction the world has ever seen. We need a new mind, a new way of seeing, if we are to chart a generative path forward for our future generations.

So, you see, by reading this book of meditations, we are up to something together. We are living in mythic times. We are living within the tension of deep awakening and deep, willful blindness. We are between stories. We are deciding whether ours will be the story of the Great Turning, when we honor our interdependence with creation and embrace ways to live sustainably on the earth. Or will we miss the moment, the time we could have saved ourselves and our children, but could not muster the wisdom or the will to do so?

What story will we live? Philosopher and author Jean Houston once said, "We are 'mything links,' links between the great mythic stories, the great stories of all times and places, and the playing out of those

stories in everyday life.” How we live out those linkages determines a great deal at this point, so it is important that we are aware of the world we create.

Surely there are many ways to develop our spiritual consciousness. Why invest time in a book of meditations? In my life as a pastor, I appreciate how rituals and reflection work together to deepen our senses and our sense of self. A daily practice of reading, reflecting, and journaling can have a powerful effect on how we perceive “what is so” in our world and where God might be leading us to make a difference.

The lessons I have learned as a pilot are woven throughout this book as they have been great teachers for me. Changes in altitude grant us different ways of seeing the world that create new possibilities for acting. At the same time, forces like wind gusts, weather fronts, temperature, and air density—all outside of our control—require agile adaptation and change how we fly moment by moment. Safety checks and emergency procedures keep us as safe as possible but can’t predict or prevent everything. I’ve learned that thoughtful attention and daily practice—a theme that I invite throughout this book—have created a muscle memory that makes me a safer pilot. This is how faith works as well. It is something you practice and, in that practice, it both teaches and changes you.

In *Searching for the Sacred*, we will journey together as we seek different altitudes and bring thoughtful attention to our lives. We share a call to rise to this historic moment, to deepen our wisdom and discover how we and God might create a better, more just world for all. I am honored to be on this journey with you.



# How to Use This Book

Most of us read devotional books as a way of connecting to an ongoing conversation between ourselves and God. We use the prompts as a threshold, an invitation, to our own listening for God's "still, small voice" in our lives. I encourage you to read these meditations and then simply sit with them. Listen to your own intuition and open yourself to sensing God within you.

This book contains sixty meditations with scripture references and reflection questions. You can start reading at any time of the year. I recommend you read one reflection a day for sixty days, taking time to journal and consider the insights each meditation offers to you. We've left space in the book for you to write, though you might also wish to keep your own journal for longer reflections. You should plan to set aside thirty minutes a day for this practice.

Each meditation begins with a scripture reference from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Protestant Bible. This translation, published in 1989, benefits from hundreds of years of biblical scholarship and is considered by most biblical scholars to be the most accurate English translation to date. I hope you will also find that this translation has retained much of the beautiful prose and poetry of the English language without sacrificing the accuracy of the original texts.

If you are a member of a congregation, you may also find this book useful for classes or small group gatherings. Many groups read a meditation together and then use the reflection questions at the end of each chapter to guide their conversations.

I hope you find within the book an invitation to deepen your connection to Love. I hope as you read these meditations, you find yourself becoming more kind, compassionate, and understanding. I hope you sense your connection to all of creation—your interdependence with all that is—and this wakes you to the urgency of acting in this moment to heal our planet and ourselves.

Thank you for taking the time to journey with me through these sixty meditations.

## In Prayer

*May you live in this truth:*

*God beneath you,  
God in front of you,  
God behind you,  
God above you,  
God within you.*

*May this truth grant you peace.*

*Amen.*

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# Meditations

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# Take Only What You Need

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)*



Recently I had a beautiful conversation with a colleague. Her mother had passed away, and she faced the overwhelming task of cleaning out her home. Weeks passed as she faced the grief she knew this would bring and wrestled with the best way to approach the work.

By a stroke of providence, she connected with a woman who ran an estate sales company. In conversation with her, the woman said to her, “Go through the house and take only what you want. Take all the time you need. Then leave the rest to us. We will take care of it.”

As my colleague reflected on that moment, she said, “Her saying those words to me was the most wonderful act of grace. I felt such relief. It allowed me to grieve my mother without the burden of the rest.”

As I listened to her story, I thought about so many of us working in companies and faith communities that have been forever changed by the pandemic. So much of our life wasn’t working. Companies were forcing too many of us into gray cubicles with mindless work. Our economies were consuming our planet. Faith communities were facing unsustainable financial realities. We were killing ourselves with over-scheduled lives.

It’s as if this global disruption was saying to us, “It is time for your old life to die and a new life to be born. Take a moment and look around. Take with you only what you really want and think you will need. Leave everything else. From dust, to dust. All will be cared for.”

If you are worried about how to help people through this time, perhaps offer a word about the peace that comes with letting go, taking only what you need. The pattern of life has always been life, death, and life again. We will carry on, lighter and less burdened for the journey ahead. We will thrive.

If you are a leader in a faith community, perhaps consider that this is the “Great Rummage Sale” that our beloved Phyllis Tickle talked about so often. Your work is to let go of the trappings of the institutions that will not serve the movement going forward. Whatever isn’t working, whatever you don’t want or need, leave behind. This is no time for nostalgia. Our world needs new experiences of sacred awakening. Bring from our traditions only that which draws us into deeper connection to God.

Life is, in the end, about learning when to hold on and when to let go.

**Reflection Question**

- What parts of your life and self do you want to leave behind in our pre-pandemic world?
- What values and practices do you want to take into the future?

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# An Unexpected Emergency in Flight

*Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. (Joshua 1:9)*



As I was taking off from Peachtree-Dekalb Airport (KPDK) in Atlanta, another pilot who had been cleared to land lowered his landing gear on his dissent as he had hundreds of times before. But this time, as his landing gear descended, it began making a horrible shaking noise. This is never good. He called the tower and reported that he might have an emergency on his hands. All of us in flight immediately tuned in.

The controller called back to the pilot and recommended he do a flyby so that the controllers in the tower, using binoculars, could visually confirm that the landing gear was down. They would not be able to confirm that the landing gear was locked in place, which left the risk open that the gear could collapse once the plane touched the runway. But it's what they could do in the moment. The pilot flew low straight down runway 3L, and the controllers called back, confirming that they could indeed see all three wheels.

They cleared the pilot to circle the airport. The air traffic controller called him, saying, "Our longest runway is yours. When you are ready, and only when you are ready, you are cleared to make your turn and land. We are prepared for you."

He made a wide circle so that he had time to get himself mentally prepared for potential emergency procedures. Ground services and the fire department got in position to meet the plane quickly if his landing gear collapsed. Everything was in place. The rest of us listened (and prayed). We only made radio calls as required by regulation. We wanted to make sure that frequency was open for that pilot to use in any way he needed. The waiting was interminable.

Finally, the pilot entered his final approach. Responding to the air traffic controller, he confirmed there was one soul on board and forty

gallons of remaining fuel, which the fire department would need to know to gauge the intensity of the potential emergency.

In this situation, pilots are trained to land the airplane at the lowest speed possible and hold the airplane's weight off the disabled wheel for as long as possible. At some point, gravity takes over, and there's nothing left to be done.

The pilot lined up for runway 3R. He lowered his airspeed to just above stall speed, and then he gently, as if like a feather, placed that airplane onto the runway. The landing gear screeched and shimmied and left black rubber tire marks down the runway. But it remained intact, and he was safe. The controller came back on the radio with his call sign confirming that the plane was clear of the runway. Then he said to the pilot, "Really great job, sir." It was a simple salute that held a universe of relief and respect from all of us.

Things go wrong in life despite our every attempt to make it safe and predictable. We can't anticipate the curveballs that life throws our way even as we try to prepare to handle them in the safest way possible. Life is risky. The wondrous gift is that as we each experience our moments of challenge, we are never alone.

Compassion is the comforting presence we grant one another in the moments of our deep challenges. It is how we embody the Divine. In that space of loving witness, we meet God in each other and are moved to care for one another's plight.

I often sign my emails and notes with the words, "We are in this together." Yesterday, I was reminded by an ATC controller and a lucky pilot just how essential that truth is.

### Reflection Questions

- What curveballs have come your way that felt overwhelming but worked out in the end? What did you learn about yourself?
- Asking for help can be hard. Whose help do you need in your life and what stops you from asking? What if you reached out to them today?





# In the Face of Heartbreak and Hope

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.  
(Philippians 4:7)*



Some years ago, I had the chance to visit Israel. We toured the entire country, studying archaeology, learning about the history, and seeing firsthand the strain of so many years of conflict and violence. We met many people whose stories of loss, pain, hope, and faith will stay with me for a lifetime.

One woman I met changed my view of life.

She was an old woman when I met her in the old city of Jerusalem. She made stoles for a living. As I was browsing through her store, I asked her how she started making them, supposing that she was some poor woman who spotted a niche in selling stoles to American pastors who are always looking for some good “bling” for their robes.

Instead, she told me about her life. Many years before, her three children had been with her in the market one day and had the bad luck of being too close to a suicide bomber. She was off buying some vegetables for their dinner that evening when she heard someone scream. She looked back just in time to watch as her children—her life—were blown from the face of the earth. Can you imagine this horror? Can you imagine the sheer unspeaking, crushing pain of this?

She spent the next year of her life in a numb fog, trying to understand how and why this could happen. Until finally, she stopped. She awoke one morning realizing that there are no good answers to these questions. What would answers bring her anyway? What she had to do was to decide how to live.

Her way of living in the midst of her woundedness was to start making these stoles. To her, they became signs of peace and symbols of God’s

unfailing love. She has a vision of clergy all across the world wearing them as they stand in pulpits, march in protests, and sit with the sick. In her brokenness, she turned to love, gifting us all with her testimony, her handmade art, and her unfailing grace.

When I found the stole I wanted to buy, she placed it over my shoulders. Looking me in the eyes, she said, “This is a symbol of peace that I give to you this day. May every day of your life bring peace to our earth and love to all people.” It was the most powerful commissioning I have ever known.

Were I to suffer such terrible loss in my life, I pray that I would have the faith and strength that she has. She could have become deeply bitter. She could have sought revenge. She could have lived with biting anger. But instead, she decided to live believing that God is love and grace is true.

I don’t know her name. I wish I did. But when I put on that stole, I give thanks that by grace her life touched mine.

How are you turning your wounds into signs of grace? I think, in the end, that is what Love is finally about.

### Reflection Questions

- What has pain taught you about love?
- Bad things happen in life. How does that change how you think about and relate to God?

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# We Are All One

*"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. (Revelation 1:8)*



Years ago, I went hiking through the rainforests of Costa Rica. I had never before experienced the magnificent energy of a rainforest. I remember my sense of wonder, walking under a fern frond and looking up to see that fern was nearly twice as tall as me. I brushed plants that recoiled at my touch and then opened again once I passed. I met a lizard braced on a towering tree who looked me straight in the eyes as if to have a conversation with me. Like Alice in Wonderland, I was in awe.

Likely because of that sense of awe, I had my first formative experience of Oneness. In my wonder, something in me shifted just enough for me to grasp an overwhelming sense of interdependence with everything around me. I was me, but I was also the giant fern, grasping plants, towering tree, and talkative lizard. They were also me. I was solid in form, but I also could permeate everything around me, just as everything around me could permeate me.

It's strange to "language" the experience. Mystics talk about "non-dual actualization." The best I can say is that in that moment, and in many since, I have understood at a deep, expansive level that we are all One. We are all stardust, energy flows, Love's greatest expressions. This capacity for non-dual expansion of consciousness is not necessarily unique. It is something that happens to and for many of us, sometimes spontaneously and often through practice. Meditation and prayer have become profound teachers for me for this reason. They are the pathways by which I remember who I am.

As I think about the world we are creating together, I have a growing sense of urgency that our only sustainable future begins with our willingness to ground ourselves (literally) in our awareness of interdependence (Oneness), and then to create our businesses, institutions, politics, and rituals from that fertile soil. Nothing else will hold together the global future that awaits us.

During the Christian season of Advent, we travel through the four themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. We are waiting for God to breakthrough to us. We are waiting to see what has been true all along—our longing to experience hope, peace, joy, and love is actually some wiser part of us calling us to break out of the delusion of dualism. We are not separate from each other nor the planet. We are more connected than we ever dreamed.

Perhaps this sounds crazy to you. If you are willing to risk it, here is my invitation: Get up earlier in the morning than usual. In a quiet space, perhaps after lighting a candle and taking a few deep breaths, repeat this prayer as a mantra, a guide to ease you into openness. When you are there, let it go, and simply . . . be.

Be still and know that I am God.  
Be still and know that I am.  
Be still and know.  
Be still.  
Be.

I am praying for you and inspired by who you are becoming. Indeed, the whole future of the world depends on it.

### Reflection Questions

- We must move beyond the illusion of separation in order to fully actualize a more holistic vision of our world. How might you explore opening yourself to your interdependence with all of creation?
- Meditation can be challenging for a lot of us. What gets in your way?

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## In Prayer

*May you trust the Great Spirit  
who has loved you,  
loves you now,  
and will always love you,  
to guide your steps in these unfolding days.*

*Amen.*

# Becoming Real

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. (James 3:13)*



I have felt echoes of my theological training in my exploration of social transformation and transpersonal psychology. It seems that the approaches of human development, psychology, and spirituality all suggest that over time we grow in awareness and awakening. These approaches suggest that we move from a dualist mindset (the world is about me vs. you) to one of interdependence and unity (the world is about all of creation). We move from the illusion of separation to the recognition that all in the universe are united in God.

The way we know we are on that path is by observing a shift in ourselves. We stop defending our “rightness” and start forgiving those who are at earlier stages of understanding. We forgive because we too went through less advanced stages, and we recognize ourselves in them.

For most of us, some form of suffering, loss, failure, or darkness leads us into deeper awareness and growth. Very little of institutional religion is honest about this. In fact, it is the mystics and the outcasts who are undefended enough to pretend that it is otherwise. Mystics teach us that periods of disorientation and confusion where we struggle with our own shadows and failures are core to the human experience. It’s our willingness to become REAL that marks the transformation of our journeys.

Margery Williams Bianco writes beautifully about this in her children’s book, *The Velveteen Rabbit*. When the young Rabbit asks the old Skin Horse about how to become real, he responds:

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”