



spiritual practice delight

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU DELIGHTED IN SOMETHING?

“Everyone raised his hand to pick the fruit he best liked the look of, and then everyone paused for a second. This fruit was so beautiful that each felt “It can’t be meant for me... surely we’re not allowed to pluck it.” It’s all right,” said Peter. “I know what we’re all thinking. But I’m sure, quite sure, we needn’t. I’ve a feeling we’ve got to the country where everything is allowed.”

“Here goes, then!” said Eustace. And they all began to eat. What was the fruit like? Unfortunately no one can describe a taste. All I can say is that, compared with those fruits, the freshest grapefruit you’ve ever eaten was dull, and the juiciest orange was dry, and the most melting pear was hard and woody, and the sweetest wild strawberry was sour. And there were no seeds or stones, and no wasps.”

C.S. Lewis The Last Battle

“Look, the winter is past,
and the rains are over and gone.
The flowers are springing up,
the season of singing birds has come,
and the cooing of turtledoves fills the air.
The fig trees are forming young fruit,
and the fragrant grapevines are blossoming.”

Song of Solomon 2:11-13

“The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.”

Zephaniah 3:17

“I delight greatly in the Lord;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

Isaiah 61:10

“Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him and he will do this...”

Psalms 37:4-5

REFLECTIONS ON DELIGHT

“When is the last time you remember truly delighting in something - being so enthralled with what was before your senses that you became totally immersed in the present moment and your heart welled up with joy?”

According to Shauna Niequist ([link below](#)), delight is when we engage our senses and our spirits to experience the world God made and in that moment we feel a welling up of joy, goodness, and gratitude. Notice there is both an internal and external aspect to delight. Delight is not something that takes place entirely inside of us disconnected from what’s around us. It’s an experience of the world through our senses, and it takes place as our hearts and spirits tap into the world and appreciate what’s around us. It involves both our senses and our spirit.

Some people have a natural bent toward delight, others do not. For example, I have a natural bent toward seriousness (unless I’m on vacation and absent from responsibility). I am more inclined to see what’s wrong than what’s right, and I want to reform rather than delight. However, I was reminded by Shauna Niequist that you cannot fuel activism long term without the practice of delight to fill you up. Without delight, our senses will dull, our heart will harden, and we will find ourselves further and further away from our own self and the world God created.

What might delight look like in your life, in your current season? Keep in mind that what brings delight will vary from person to person and from season to season. What brings delight to you might be different from what brings delight to me. In one season you might need something restorative and gentle. In another season you may need something loud and physical and wild.

What about today? Maybe you need an exciting movie in the theatre. Maybe you need an amazing meal. Maybe you need to sit on a beach and feel the sand as you listen to the waves. Maybe you need to watch a thunderstorm.

One thing that stops delight is putting too much pressure on it. As Shauna Niequist says, “We need a low bar for delight so we can be easily delighted.” If this is true, then there is not one place where you cannot find God’s fingerprint and something to lift your heart” Nick Osborne, thewildway.ca

HOW TO PRACTICE DELIGHT

As we see from Osborne’s reflections above, there are many ways to practice delighting in God’s goodness. Billie Hoard says “to feast, to love, to celebrate, to gaze at the sky in wonder, are all acts of spiritual insight. They are all disciplines.”

Shauna Niequist suggests that you begin your practice of delight by going on a delight walk. A delight walk is making space to walk, drive, or ride away from your home. On this journey you are invited to focus on the world around you. Ask yourself questions like the following that engage your senses and expand your awareness.

- What am I seeing? What word would I use to describe that colors I am seeing?
- What am I hearing? Is that a bird? Is there a rhythm to that construction noise? Do I hear accents in people’s speech around me?
- What am I smelling? How does the ground feel underneath my feet?
- What can I touch? What do the plants around me feel like beneath my fingertips? What textures do I encounter on my walk?

“It may be difficult at first. However, delight will eventually come, and the more you practice, the more your senses will become engaged: Wow. I never knew how many shades of green there are right outside my window. This person’s accent reminds me of a trip I went on. This smell reminds me of my childhood. In the words of Mary Oliver, delight requires only three simple things from us: Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.” *Osborne*

As you walk, tell God about the wonders that you are experiencing in your own backyard or neighborhood.

“It didn’t take me long to learn that the discipline or practice of writing these essays occasioned a kind of delight radar. Or maybe it was more like the development of a delight muscle. Something that implies that the more you study delight, the more delight there is to study.” *Ross Gay, [The Book of Delights: Essays](#)*