

More from Megan L. Anderson, Fall 2016

Like so many others raised in the Church, the importance of daily “quiet times” or “devotions” was drilled into me from childhood. If you skipped that minimum 15 minutes of prayer and bible reading, then you threw the doors of your soul open to demonic influence. Devotional times were made to sound more like talismans warding off evil than sweet moments of intimacy with the Savior. The downside of emphasizing spiritual disciplines so strongly was that it elevated the ritual over the reason. The power was in the practice, not the person of Christ who defeated hell on our behalf.

Thankfully God is more gracious, merciful, and understanding than the rhetoric of my childhood. While prayer and engaging with scripture are vital to our spiritual health, God draws us to himself in a rich diversity of ways. The Holy Spirit doesn't tick boxes on a rubric each day counting how many bible verses we read, minutes we prayed, or judging the appropriateness of where or when we did. He desires relationship. Living in the Spirit, a cup of tea can be as sacred as a communion chalice, a walk in the woods as a sanctuary, and a shower stall as a baptismal. So if our rituals aren't serving that relationship, then it's time to reevaluate.

This past summer I quit all my routine disciplines in favor of sitting in silence with God. Instead of telling the Lord when, where, and how to speak to me, I opened myself to his presence however he wanted to bestow it. Over those two months God showed up in more deeply personal and unpredictable ways than I ever could have imagined. Now, as I step back into church society and re-approach spiritual habits, I'm more conscious of the purpose and meaning behind them.

What activities give you a sense of God's loving presence? Which feel dry or lifeless? I encourage you to at least temporarily lay those empty habits down and offer God the freedom to

meet you on new sacred ground. It's an opportunity to love you he won't refuse, and one I promise you won't regret.