
Week I

THE CUP OF LIFE

- Day 1: The Cup of My Life
Day 2: A Container of God's Presence
Day 3: The Vessel of Loving Energy
Day 4: The Boundaries of the Cup
Day 5: The Cup as My Teacher
Day 6: Thirsting for Filling
Day 7: Integration/Review

A View of the Week

Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply.

—Henri J. M. Nouwen

When I was a young child of eight years old, I lived on a beautiful farm. Like my other siblings, I had chores to do after school. Mine consisted of feeding the chickens and gathering the eggs. I didn't like doing this because my free spirit wanted to be out in the grove playing or down by the creek watching tadpoles and catching minnows.

But one day all of that changed for me. I learned that I had a secret companion who always kept me company, even when I was doing the daily

farm chores. Hidden away deep within my heart was a loving being named God who would always love me and would never leave me. It was at this time that a wise teacher taught me about friendship with God. She assured me that I would never be alone because I was carrying the very life of God within me. I was enthused about this discovery. I could sense that “Someone” was there. I began carrying on endless conversations with this Friend. Walking home from school, doing my chores, playing in the grove—all of these activities became opportunities to be with my “special Someone.” This was the beginning of my relationship with God.

As I grew older, I recognized this inner presence as a dynamic source of guidance and consolation. I became ever more deeply rooted in the belief that this indwelling God loves me totally and unconditionally. To this day, I draw comfort and courage from the belief that I am a container holding the presence of God. This awesome and humbling gift of the Divine Indwelling constantly enlivens my spiritual path and seeds my transformation.

The more I become aware of God’s presence in my life, the more I thirst to know this Sacred One at an ever deeper and deeper level. Like a cup that seemingly has more and more room to be filled, so I feel that my capacity to be united with God keeps expanding. The more I know how loved I am by God (the more my cup is filled), the more I am always thirsting for more of God (seeing how much room the cup still has in it to receive).

When I think about the spiritual life, I think of a life with God that is healthy and vibrant. The root and foundation of this life is *relationship*. This relationship may have many struggles, crooked paths, and hidden corners, but at the core, there is a bond that is deep and strong. This relationship feeds and nourishes my inner self and gives a vitality and vibrancy to all of my life.

Each one of us is a temple of the Holy One. Each of us carries a spiritual power in us that can cause even the tiniest of faith-seeds to grow. It is vital that we protect and nurture this relationship so that it thrives. The cup of our spiritual life must be cared for and replenished as it pours its contents away in loving service. Like the cup with its boundaries, we, too, need parameters so that our life does not seep away into endless busy-ness and unguarded, unfocused activity.

This week I invite you to reflect on your relationship with God, to celebrate the beauty of this presence within you, to be grateful for the marvelous life flowing through your spirit. Be attentive to the One who dwells within you.



*a simple container
has spoken
in my solitude,
a teacher
and bringer of wisdom
whispering truths
of an indwelling God
in the container
of my soul
hearkening to
my hidden ability
to be filled
and to pour
from a life
of abundance
reminding me
of necessary boundaries
for nurturing
the sacred space
within me*

*inviting me
to sip often from
the Divine wellspring,
source that slakes
my spiritual thirst
calling to me
like a seed
in the soil:
believe believe believe
in the power
that is present
in the life
that is possible*

—Joyce Rupp



Day 1

The Cup of My Life

You are a love song
beauty set to music
You are a love song
I have chosen you.

—Theresa Hucal

It was a chilly evening in November when we gathered to mourn the death of my friend's beautiful Italian mother. The kinship of those who had loved her eased some of the heartache we were feeling. There was a special moment when the sadness in the room changed to a glow of love. I felt it as we listened to the singing of "You Are a Love Song." I sensed that each one of us was turning in memory to this woman and recalling how she had truly been a "love song" of God for the many people whose lives she had touched. She had been a cup of life for those who had known her. The things she had done with her life were not grandiose. They were simple, human endeavors. But out of those ordinary activities and experiences, she had brought many extraordinary songs of love to others.

What would it be like if we believed that we were a love song of God? How would it change our presence with others? While healthy spirituality requires a deep belief in our own loveableness, this belief is not always easy to accept. The cup can be a teacher in this. Think of the cup as a symbol of our unique self. Many coffee and tea cups have a special shape and size, a "personality," so to speak, just as each human person does. Like a cup, our physical, psychological, and spiritual shape is unique to each of us. We cannot take someone else's body, or spirituality, or personality and make it our own any more than a cup can change its color and shape to match each person who drinks from it. The cup is a good container no matter who uses it. It is of value in itself.

Too often people want someone else's spirituality rather than their own. I've discovered that the more I am conscious and accepting of God's love for

me, the more I can accept myself and the unique way that my spiritual path unfolds. God created each of us out of love. We are beauty set to music. We are one-of-a-kind, unique, meant to be a light of love in transforming our world.

Even if you do not feel awe or gratitude or compassion when you think about yourself, try to believe it today. Ask God to help you to see yourself as a song of love, a cup full of goodness, bringing life to others.

THE DAILY PRACTICE

Breathprayer

Breathing in: I am . . .

Breathing out: . . . a love song

Reflection

Hold the cup in your hands.

Notice its style, shape, color, size.

Be conscious of yourself as a cup held in God's hands.

Accept your uniqueness and your goodness.

Thank God for creating you as you are.

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-7

I have called you by name,

You are mine. . . .

You are precious in my sight,

and honored, and I love you (Is 43:1,4).

Journaling (Choose one or more and respond.)

When I think about God loving me unconditionally as I am, I . . .

As I pray through these six weeks of spiritual guidance, I most desire . . .

Dear God . . . (write a letter, a song, a psalm, a poem . . . to God).

Prayer

I turn to you, Divine Creator, and I thank you for the person I am. I am a cup of life. I have love and goodness within me. Help me to hear your music in my soul today and to smile in gratitude when I think of my own uniqueness. Let me not doubt my value or question my worth. Help me to know and to accept who I am. I am yours. May I bring life to my world.

Today

I will try to be a love song for others this day.

Day 2

A Container of God's Presence

You are a dwelling place for the Source of all life.

—Macrina Wiederkehr

One of my favorite parts of the day is when I come in from my early morning walk and have a cup of freshly brewed, steaming hot coffee. On cold winter days, I especially like the feel of my favorite coffee mug in my hands and I thoroughly enjoy the sips of liquid that bring welcomed warmth into my body.

My coffee mug reminds me that cups are containers designed to hold something refreshing, just as we are containers meant to hold the Divine Presence. Because God dwells within me, I like to think of myself as a mini Ark of the Covenant. God goes with me wherever I go. I carry God into each relationship and experience. A powerful thought, that one.

Our understanding and our experience of God shapes our image of God and our spirituality. Who is God? Where do we find this God of ours? If we look at the Hebrew scriptures, we will find that the Divine Presence is everywhere, always moving and always calling to people, wherever they may be. If we look at the Christian scriptures, we find a significant addition: this Divine Presence has made a home *in us*. Jesus said, “Make your home in me” (Jn 15:4). He used the image of the vine and the branches to emphasize that the same life that surges through all parts of the plant is similar to the life of God that surges through our being. God is no longer just “out there.” God is also here, within us. The spirit of Jesus lives on in our own bodily temples. We have become the home of God.

Some days I go zooming along, checking off all the “stuff” I have on my “to do” list, and I totally forget that I am the home of God. When this happens, I can easily lose my reverence and my awareness of all the beauty around me. On the other hand, when I remember that God has made a home in my heart and in the heart of each one I meet, I look at people and life quite differently. I am more patient and kind and much less judgmental.

As you move through this day, brush off the old dust and cobwebs caused by busyness and non-attention, and become aware of how God travels with you.

THE DAILY PRACTICE

Breathprayer

Breathing in: Faithful Love . . .

Breathing out: . . . dwelling in me

Reflection

Hold your empty cup in your hands.

Notice the space within the cup.

Think of the space within yourself.

It is filled with the Divine Presence.

Draw near to this Loving Presence.

Sense this Loving Presence permeating your entire being.

Rest in silence and tranquility.

Listen to God say to you: “I am here.”