

## Preparation for Journey

Many of us think of a journey as an act of traveling from one place to another. Exploring other places, visiting with family, and meeting new people expand our horizons and enrich our lives. Journeys have broadened our understanding of our world. Sometimes these journeys have challenged us physically, mentally, and emotionally. At the end, we are different from who we were before the experience.

A journey doesn't have to be physical; it may be an internal or spiritual journey. Growing up is a journey, as is growing old. Some view our whole lives as a journey from birth to death. As we learn to know ourselves and understand our place in the world, we undertake journeys of self-discovery. Even if we are not prophets, we can still undertake a pilgrimage, a journey to a sacred place (such as Mecca or Machu Picchu) for spiritual growth.

Sometimes we initiate our own journeys. We know where we want to end up and how we plan to get there. The path we choose, however, is not always the one we end up following. Other times life takes us on an unanticipated journey, and we have experiences we never expected. Have a look at Rumi's poem, "The Guest House," for an introduction to unexpected journeys. An illness, an end to a relationship, or a job change are examples of journeys we have not chosen, but are thrust upon us.

The hero's journey as described by Joseph Campbell points out the three basic stages in the hero quest: the departure (receiving the call and leaving the familiar world), the initiation (entering the unknown, tests and obstacles, transformation and atonement) and return home. The hero's journey is found in many of our favorite stories: The Iliad and the Odyssey, The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, The Matrix, to name a few. Campbell suggests that stories of religious leaders often follow a similar heroic pattern. Moses goes up on the mountaintop and returns with a new religion, Jesus spends forty days in the desert and returns with a deeper sense of purpose, and the Buddha leaves his wealthy environment, sits in meditation under a tree, and emerges to describe the path to enlightenment.

The hero's journey may point the way for us to look at our own lives, our own stories, through a new lens.

Below are quotes from others that give insights into journeys.

The voyage into the self is long and dark and full of peril, but I believe that it is a voyage that all of us will have to make before we are through. Either we climb down into the abyss willingly with our eyes open, or we risk falling into it with our eyes closed – a point on which religion and psychiatry seem to agree. *Frederick Buechner, The Hungering Dark*

We have not even to risk the adventure alone; for the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the thread of the hero-path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world. *Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces*

A holy restlessness is what prompts the pilgrimage of the spirit – a journey real or metaphorical that calls us away from what we have grown to think of as our home in order to discover a deeper sense of being at home with our human nature. *Sarah York, Pilgrim Heart*

## **Questions to Ponder**

### **Journeys in your life**

1. What are some of the meaningful journeys of your life? In what ways were you changed by these journeys?
2. Think about a journey that was thrust upon you. Did you come away with a learning or insight?
3. Think about a spiritual/interior journey you have taken. What did you discover about yourself?
4. If your journey involves a physical destination, what is it about this location that is important to you?
5. If there is a hero's journey (such as Star Wars or the King Arthur legend) that you especially like, think about the parts that most captivate you.

### **Our journey together in a covenant group**

6. Think about the journey we have all had together in this covenant group for the last 7 months. What is something you appreciate about this group as it has been?
7. What are the insights and gifts of wisdom you've found during the year in this covenant group? In yourself? From the others in your group?

### **Words of the Day**

The Words of the Day will be to write down a few words or a phrases that describe a journey, so be thinking of a few words, phrases, or metaphors that work for you. The prompt will be:  
"My journey is ... "

**\*\*In addition, be prepared to name a characteristic or quality you admire for each member of the group. We will share these words or phrases with each other in a closing ritual.\*\***