

FAITH IN THE CITY

A scenic photograph of a coastal city at sunset. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a bright orange and yellow near the horizon. The sun is low on the horizon, reflecting on the calm water of the ocean. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a rocky beach is visible, with a single person standing near the water's edge. To the right, the dark silhouettes of city buildings and a Ferris wheel are visible against the bright sky.

A companion guide for
your every day living and loving.

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THIS GUIDE:

As you engage with the practices found within this booklet, take some time to reflect on your experience:

- ☐ Who is around you and what are they doing?
- ☐ What surprises you? What piques your curiosity?
- ☐ Does anything make you want to investigate further?
- ☐ Where might God be at work in what you are seeing?
- ☐ Pray. And then pray again.



FURTHER RESOURCES:

Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

Diana Butler Bass, *Grounded* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2015).

Dallas Willard, *Living in Christ's Presence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

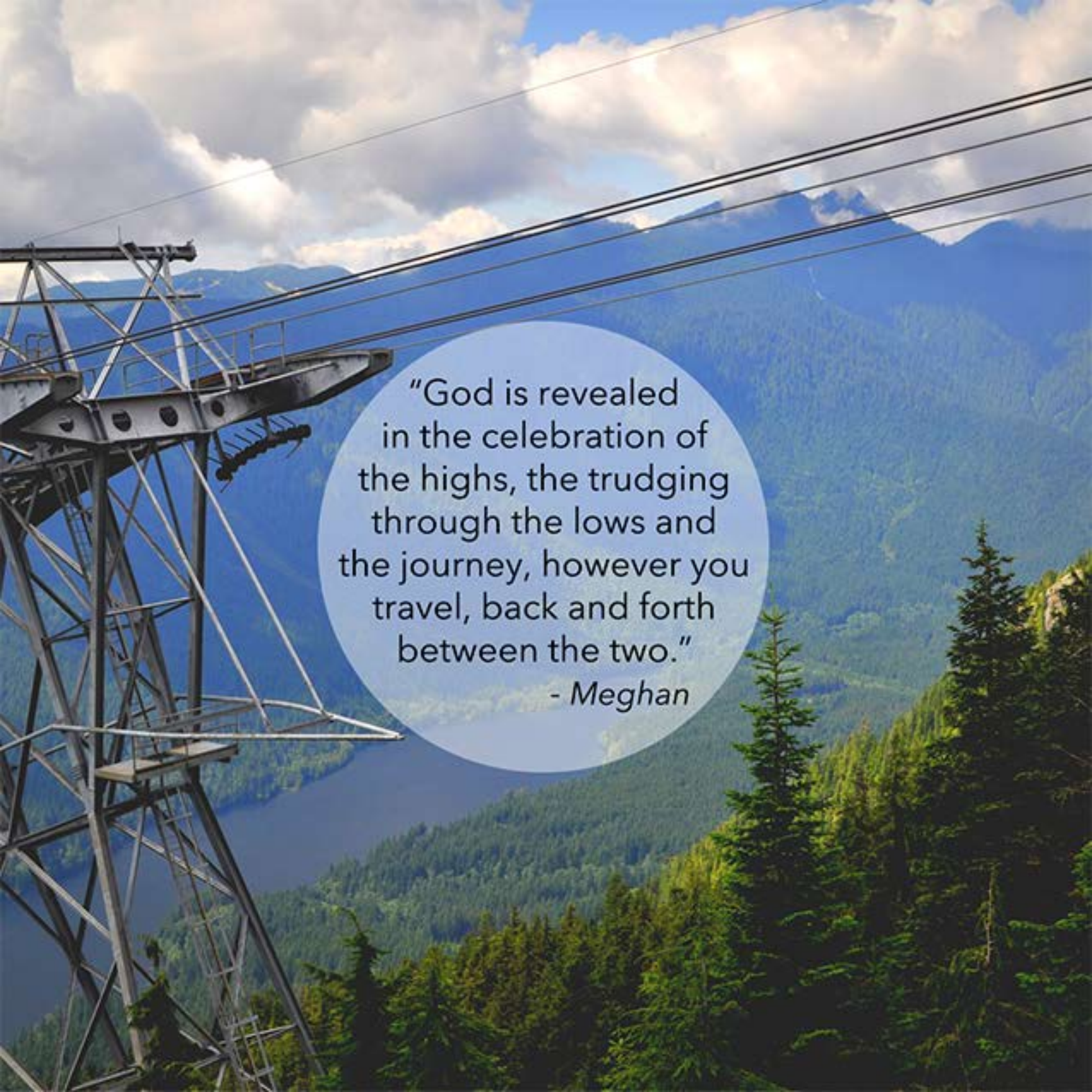
AN INVITATION

This little guide is for you, fellow sojourner.
For you to grow in the ways you live your faith in this world.
For you to uncover new-to-you ways of seeing God at work in your community.
For you to explore, play, live, and love.

After all, isn't that what this is all about? We live in God's world, and every single day, we're invited to let our faith impact those we encounter in our homes, in our offices, and in our neighbourhoods. Theologian and missiologist Lesslie Newbigin once put it this way: "we must live in the Kingdom of God in such a way that it provokes questions for which the gospel is the answer."

As you flip through these pages, imagine where God might be waiting for you.
Take risks. Be bold.

Live as though Christ's beautiful, transformative presence in you makes a difference (hint: it does).

A scenic view of a mountain landscape. In the foreground on the left, a large metal cable car tower structure is visible. Several cables run diagonally across the upper half of the image. The background features a vast, forested mountain range under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A dense evergreen forest covers the lower slopes of the mountains. A semi-transparent light blue circle is centered in the image, containing a quote.

"God is revealed
in the celebration of
the highs, the trudging
through the lows and
the journey, however you
travel, back and forth
between the two."

- Meghan

LIVING AUTHENTICALLY

The communities in which we live are no longer marked by simple dualisms: Ford versus Chevy, Coke versus Pepsi. Unfolding before us is a panoply of ways of defining the good life, each with its own images and evangelists.

In the midst of these voices competing for our allegiance, how does one walk faithfully in Jesus' footsteps? How does one live and act as a Christian in a world where we each are urged to "speak our own truth," where decisions are often more impacted by a YOLO (you only live once) ethic or a morality where all is permitted "as long as no one gets hurt"?

What if, to uncover the face of Christ in others, we were first called to remove the masks that we ourselves wear? Are we willing, as followers of the The Way, to let people see our lives as they really are, with all their imperfections?

To live authentically, then, means living with vulnerability. And to live with vulnerability means rooting our lives in the incarnation - he who showed us how to be fully human.

A black and white photograph of a man sitting on a white bench, playing a white upright piano. The piano is heavily decorated with graffiti, including the words "destiny", "lawson", "CANADA", and "Sonic Love". The man is wearing a dark t-shirt and a wristband that says "OUT OF SERVICE". He is looking down at the piano keys. The background is a brick wall.

IN SCRIPTURE
Colossians 2:6-19.

PRACTICING THE AUTHENTIC LIFE

Look silently into someone's eyes for 4 minutes. ●

Be yourself. ●

Wear something in public that you wouldn't normally wear outside. What emotions arise? ●

Say what you mean, and mean what you say. ●

Ask God "who am I in your eyes?"
Journal the thoughts that emerge. ●

Love from the centre of who you are: don't pretend. ●

Be the same "you" everywhere you go, in every conversation, in every interaction. ●

Photo by C. Van Wyck.

LIVING COUNTERPOINT

Coun·ter·point (*noun*): \ˈkaʊn-tər-,pɔɪnt\

Something that is different from something else in usually a pleasing way.

The word "counterpoint" is a helpful way of understanding the Christian life - the call to live lives that stand apart from the culture they exist in, and, in so doing, add beauty to the whole. As the apostle Paul once wrote, "do not conform to the pattern of this world." Jesus put it this way: as his followers, we are the "salt of the earth."

But are we?

Do our lives really add flavour to our neighbourhoods? Or are our lives indistinguishable from those around us, deeply enmeshed in a dream that isn't God's?

The question that arises then is this: what is it about the way we live and love and interact with our surroundings that points people to God?

PRACTICING THE COUNTERPOINT LIFE

Go out of your way for someone (without resenting it). ●

Add an *extra* 10% to a tip, just because. ●


Treat waiters, cleaners, nannies, drivers (you get the picture) as you would a son or daughter. ●

Make a point of encouraging someone half your age. ●

Ask someone you consider inferior how you can help. ●
Help, and reconsider their inferiority.

Pray for those you hate. ●
And for those who hate you.

Do something so completely out of *your* ordinary. ●

A serene sunset scene over a body of water. The sky is a mix of soft blues, oranges, and yellows, with wispy clouds. The water reflects the colors of the sky. In the distance, a large ship is visible on the left, and mountains are on the horizon. A dark, silhouetted beach is in the foreground. A large, semi-transparent white circle is centered over the image, containing a quote.

"My friends and I call
this 'the place of bliss.'
It feels like God is always
there. A thinking place.
A laughing place."

- Claire

LIVING PATIENTLY

The narrative that underlies so many of our theologies is one in which we are “going” elsewhere, as though our time on earth is all about waiting until we get to heaven.

Yet, the beautiful drama of Scripture, God’s Story, casts a different vision of what it means to be fully human. For Jesus and his followers, life isn’t so much about *going* to heaven, as it is about heaven coming to us. We proclaim this patient theology when we say, “your Kingdom come, on earth, as it is in heaven” in the Lord’s Prayer.

Through this lens, all of life is filled with intention and purpose. God establishes a new city - a new realm, through us, God’s people. And the best part? It’s already *in our midst*. This is the story of God making all things new.


As you walk through your community, do you see it? Do you catch glimpses of the “already-not-yet”, the shimmering City of God, waiting to burst forth?



IN SCRIPTURE
Revelation 21:1-7.

PRACTICING THE PATIENT LIFE

- Write someone a letter - the slow way. ●
- Walk your neighbourhood at half your usual pace, praying as you do so for the homes you pass by. ●
- Nurture a plant. ●
- Delay gratification. ●
- Take transit, wander, and wonder. ●
- Drive the speed limit. ●
- Sit in a public space and watch those passing by. ●
Wonder about their stories. Be curious. Pray.



"I sat down on a
bench to pray, not
feeling the best. I looked
up: beauty everywhere.
Made by God. The flowers
were as beautiful as
the moment."

- *Mariam*

LIVING IN THE WORK-REST RHYTHM

We are tempted to make various kinds of activity some sort of substitute for creating space for a day of rest; but, the practice of Sabbath, when and where we acknowledge who and whose we are, can change a life.

Indeed, this life-giving rest, filled with thanksgiving to the One who did the one thing needed, breathes life into us. Deeply. Pausing to kneel at the feet of the Resurrected One, in the midst of flurries of commitment, in the midst of iCals bursting at the seams, is a profound witness to the exhausted, depleted world around us.

What if we and our one home, this Earth of ours, were paying the cost of the restless busyness that knows no measure of success but greater productivity?

How do we stop?

How do we breathe?

How do we do life in the city in such a way that our lives are surrendered to a different way of doing things?

IN SCRIPTURE

Luke 10:28-42.

PRACTICING THE "WORK-REST RHYTHM" LIFE

- Observe a weekly Sabbath day for 12 weeks. ●
- Sit by a body of water. Without a watch. Or phone. ●
- Observe 1 hour of play for every 6 hours of work. ●
- Look up "Prayer of Examen". Do it daily for a week. ●
Or two.
- Find a memorial bench. Sit there. Pray. ●
- Be content. ●
- Pause. ●
- Laugh. ●

Photo by K. Ives.

LIVING WITH DIVERSITY

In a first-century letter written to the church in Galatia, the apostle Paul says, "in Christ's family, there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal."

Equal. This is the vision that Paul casts for the Church, and, needless to say, 2000 years later, this still isn't a *fait accompli*. All it takes is a quick glance at the news to be reminded of the extent to which we human beings divide, segregate, label, categorize. Especially when it comes to religious traditions.

But there's hope.

Despite all of this, there are signs of much cooperation in our cities. There are signs of mutual recognition, signs of dialogue. Signs of people looking over their walls to uncover God's face in people entirely unlike them.

This is, after all, who we were created to be.
We need one another to survive and thrive.

IN SCRIPTURE

John 4:1-42.

PRACTICING THE DIVERSE LIFE

Meet someone who is unlike you on 3 of the following: gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, income, age. Listen to their story. ●

Familiarize yourself with Recommendations 58 to 61 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report. ●


Read a book you wouldn't normally read. ●

Make note of your routines. Shake them up. ●

Visit a synagogue or a mosque. Learn. ●

Get to know your neighbours: what are their first names? What are their stories? How might you add a little life to theirs? ●

Photo by G. Carpenter.

A landscape photograph of mountains at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with clouds catching the low light. The mountains in the foreground are dark, while the peaks in the distance are illuminated with a golden glow. A semi-transparent white circle is centered in the upper half of the image, containing a quote.

"God is in strength
beyond my strength, in
love I can't comprehend,
in compassion that
displaces fear."

- *Dylan*

LIVING WITH OPEN DOORS

Abraham invites three strangers into his tent and a nation is born.

Mary and Martha invite Jesus into their home and grace abounds in ways unexpected.

Life in urban and suburban milieus can often lead to a life of isolation. Yet, at the heart of the gospel is an invitation into a new way of being through the spiritual discipline of radical hospitality - the practice of living with open doors.

But to welcome the stranger in our midst means opening ourselves up to the unexpected, to go beyond our fears in order to create space for their voice, for their humanity. Are we ready for that?

The Rule of St. Benedict, which governs the life of Benedictine monks, urges that all guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ.

All guests. As Christ.

IN SCRIPTURE
Genesis 18:1-10.

PRACTICING THE OPEN DOOR LIFE

Talk to someone you don't know for the first 3 minutes after worship. ●

Invite someone new into your home. ●
Share a meal.

Invite them over a second time. ●

Bake something for someone to say thank you. ●

Create new space in your life for God's presence. ●

Take someone for coffee. ●
Share with them what they mean to you.

Allow yourself to be surprised by the unexpected. ●

Photo by H. MacKenzie.

With Love.



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