

The following meditation, titled "Memories Crowd Upon Us," is from Thurman's Meditations of the Heart.

Memories crowd upon us as we look back over the week just passed:
Many high hopes – many dreams unfulfilled;
Many blunders made and, in the sharpness of our anguish,
We would turn back the wheels of time and try again.
Many joys that were unanticipated;
Many little graces by which our faith in ourselves and in life
Is lifted up and strengthened –
Much for which we need to be forgiven;
Much we need to forgive.
All around us, our Father, there are reminders of Thy Presence in our midst:
Pangs of conscience,
A spontaneous impulse to do the kind and gracious thing,
The sensitiveness to another's needs,
The great burden of anguish which we feel as we look out upon the world.
Teach us, O living Spirit, the wisdom to lay ourselves
Bare to Thy scrutiny – that we may reflect Thy life
In the dark places of our minds, hearts and desires;
That we may know Thy courage – and the grounds of Thy hope
for the children of men.

The following excerpt is from the meditation "A Lull in the Rhythm of Doing" from Thurman's Meditations of the Heart.

It is true that a man's whole life may be regarded as his prayer. Ordinarily, what a person does is an expression of their intent, and their intent is the focusing of their desiring, and their desires are the prayers of their heart. But such explanations are far from satisfactory. There is no argument needed for the necessity of taking time out for being alone, for withdrawal, for being quiet without and still within. The sheer physical necessity is urgent because the body and the entire central nervous system cry out for the healing waters of silence.

One could not begin the cultivation of the prayer life at a more practical point than deliberately to seek each day, several times a day, a lull in the rhythm of daily doing, a period when nothing happens that demands active participation. It is a wonderful way with which to begin the day and to bring one's day to an end.

At first the quiet times may be quite barren or merely a retreat from exhaustion. One has to get used to the stillness even after it has been achieved. The time may be used for taking stock, for examining one's life direction, one's plans, one's relations, and the like. This in itself is most profitable. It is like cleaning out the closets, or the desk drawers, and getting things in order.

The following excerpt is from the meditation “Thank God for Humor!” from Thurman’s Meditations of the Heart.

There is always in every human relationship and in every private life some place for humor, for the sparkle in the water of life. It is easy to understand the reason for much of the tension that engulfs us. Sometimes we take our own lives so seriously that there is scarcely room on the planet for any other life. There is a sense in which our own problems loom so large that they dominate our entire horizon, and all there is for us to think and feel is that which is central to our particular burdens.

[...]

If this be our mood then there is no antidote quite like a central chuckle of the spirit. Humor may not be laughter, it may not even be a smile; it is primarily a point of view, an attitude toward experience – a tangent.

[...]

True humor is a weapon, but it is used creatively when it is held firmly in the hands of a person who uses it against themselves and their own antics. All the gods of depression, gloom and melancholy must shriek with alarm when there rings down the corridor the merry music of the humorous spirit. It means that fear is in rout, that there is deep understanding of the process of life and an expansive faith which advises the spirit that, because life is its own restraint, life can be trusted.

Meditations of the Heart

By Howard Thurman

A recognition that if all life is one, that changes the nature of injury.

All Life is One

"They, as part of us, have done this to us."

"It was a very simple statement — 'They, as part of us, have done this to us.' Think it over very, very carefully. One of the most direct results of a sense of injury is the element of divisiveness or separateness that it introduces immediately. 'Look at what they are doing to me!' or 'Why do people treat me that way?'

It is obvious how this mood, understandable as it is, cuts the tie that binds man to man. Such an attitude establishes a gulf between men, made possible by the effect of their deeds on their own kind. Often we say to ourselves that the only conditions under which it is possible for one person deliberately to injure another is for the injurer to be able to regard himself as being something other than, and perhaps more than, the injured one. There is something utterly fantastic about the thing that takes place in a personality before that personality is able to hurt deliberately. Some kind of immunity against feeling must be established.

On the other hand, the injured person seems instinctively to feel that the person who injures him must be different, deeply and profoundly different or else the thing that was done would not have been done. Hence the cry, 'Look at what they are doing to me.' But when we begin with the basic idea that all life is one — that there is no such thing as an ultimate detachment of any part of life from the whole — then the meaning of the simple statement, 'They, as part of us, have done this to us,' begins to make sense.

The moment that this is understood, two attitudes become at once apparent. One: it is no longer possible to separate oneself from another person even when that other person behaves as if he were not a part of one's self. What the other person does to me is, in some very real sense, a part of me doing that thing to a part of us. Two: it becomes a reasonable thing for me to hope to understand another person because of the hope that I can and may ultimately understand myself. This is the meaning of the statement, Know thyself, which has been taken more mystically from the statement, 'Thou hast seen thy brother, thou has seen thy God.' "