

Becoming Conscious and Well: The Path to Racial Healing

Session 3—Your First Life*

We invite you to use the following questions for reflection as you watch the session 3 video: "Your First Life." Please note that all quoted material is attributed to Dr. Catherine Meeks.

1. Catherine asks "What is your commitment to? What is your intention? What is the driving energy that keeps you going?" How can answering these questions help you to know yourself and know what you are after as a person on this Earth?
2. "The last thing oppressed people need is our neurosis. We need to keep our neurosis in check as best we can so we can really be with them." Do you think of yourself as having a neurosis? What part of yourself do you need to deal with before you can engage authentically with others? How can you begin to do this?
3. "Everybody's got something of which they are afraid." What does fear have to do with the life that you live and how does it shape your way in the world?
4. Liberation comes from saying, "_____ is the one thing I'm most afraid of and I'm not going to be afraid of it anymore!" What are you afraid of and what are steps you can take to overcome your fear?
5. What did you think of the David Whyte's poem "Second Life"? Did you have an *aha* moment when reading or listening to it? Do you think you are you living a courageous or uncourageous life—or perhaps both?
6. Catherine says "isms" are about "people trying to control the exact and final destination so they can have that uncourageous life not be disturbed, which is rooted in fear." Have you ever thought of it that way before? How does it make you feel?
7. Catherine talks about being in Howard Thurman's presence and never doubting that he was a holy man even though he never really talked about God. She said this was because of the deep connection that he had with God. How can you live a life like that?
8. Catherine equates racial healing to a pilgrimage saying, "It's a journey not a destination." What does this mean to you?
9. "Every day all of us have opportunities that offer us a chance to choose courageousness or the lack of courageousness." How can you choose to be more courageous "way down deep within yourself"?

10. Catherine talks about people living like whirlwinds collecting foolishness “If you don’t get this work done any wind will blow you somewhere.” Have you ever been like a whirlwind? How can you remain grounded?
11. We need community to help us on this journey. “You need to bump up against folk and hear stuff and let it get sorted out in your soul, and God needs to be there. And God IS there.” Do you take the time to recognize how people you are bumping against might be informing your way forward?
12. Catherine says we’ve been socialized to believe that if we don’t have all these structures and hierarchies, and we don’t know what the destination is, then we’re somehow missing out on everything. But how do we know what the road will be if we’re not willing to trust the journey? Do you have a hard time trusting the journey? Do you feel like you NEED to know the destination first?
13. Catherine talks about how we organize our lives around the easiest of the easy, but we need to hold to the difficult. What does that mean to you?
14. Catherine says that racial healing and liberation has become projects and exercises instead of a way of life. How do we take it past a project and make it a way of being?
15. “Too much of the work around trying to dismantle racism is rooted in wrong-headedness and wrong intentions and it doesn’t go anywhere and turns out to be more detrimental than it is helpful.” How can you be “willing to listen and hear without changing the narrative for people” so you don’t make things worse?
16. Catherine says the following skills are needed to do the work of racial healing:
 - Openness*
 - Willingness to be vulnerable*
 - Curiosity*
 - Willingness to ask questions*
 - Willingness to listen*
 - Willingness to hear what is being said*

Which skills do you think have? Which ones do you need to work on?

17. How can these skills help you look at life as a journey rather than a destination?
18. “How are you willing to open your heart so you don’t sit in judgement?” How can others be a gift to you and you a gift to them?
19. “Nobody wants tolerance, they want acceptance.” Catherine says that in the church we have a foundation for moving past tolerance because we’ve been told everyone has a piece of God in them. If we believe that the face of God is in every single person,

tolerance is not what we should aim for. How do you work past tolerance to acceptance?

20. How do we need to restructure things in our churches so we can do the work of racial healing?
21. Catherine says it takes a lot of energy to live marginalized, to live denigrated. And to live with microaggressions. How can we create spaces where people don't have to live with that? How can getting ourselves "out of prison" lay the foundation for this work?
22. "What will it take to build spaces in Colorado where people can be more truly who God created them to be?" What are the hinderances? How is racism affecting that possibility?

*From David Whyte's poem, "My Second Life," [Poem](#)