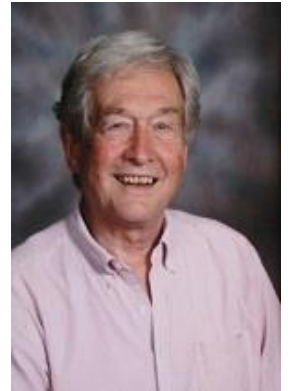


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A SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY **Based on Mark 10:46-52**

A Religious or spiritual autobiography has been an important part of the literature of faith for centuries. Here's the second in my occasional series of spiritual exercises. The first may be found at Essay 204 "Signs of the Kingdom."

B Shut yourself off from the world for a few moments and follow the directions below to compose a brief outline of your own life story from the standpoint of faith. Take pencil and paper and try to answer each of the questions below. You are constructing a kind of time line, an autobiography of your own spiritual experience. There are no wrong answers. This is strictly a private, personal endeavour.

C You will need a Bible to reference the passages from Mark suggested below. Spend a few minutes with the complete Bible text: Mark 46-52. Read through the entire narrative of Jesus' healing of the blind man. Spend some time reflecting on how this story might apply to you. Then answer the questions below.

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1 Read Mark 10:46-47: "...Jesus of Nazareth is passing by... Can you recall a time in your life when it became clear to you that life was more than the simple necessities of eating, sleeping, working, or playing, but contained also a spiritual or religious dimension? A time in your life when God seemed very near or very significant? A time when a sense of an Infinite Absolute seemed to flood in upon you? Jot down a few notes to remind you of these occasions. Perhaps you can recall an actual date.

2 Read Mark 10:48 a: "...Many sternly ordered him to be quiet..." Can you recall a time in your life when it first became clear to you that other people could hate or be mean or cruel? When you discovered that life is not always good or pleasant? When you first became aware of evil or wickedness or unkindness? Make note of this.

3 Read Mark 10:49 "...They called the blind man...'Take heart, get up, he is calling you...'" Can you recall some people who were of special help to you in your spiritual growth and development? Parents, perhaps, family members, friends. A beloved teacher? A pastor? Someone whose influence you recall today with pride and affection? Someone who helped you over some rough spots, perhaps? Someone who cared for you when it counted? A role model? A mentor? List some names.

4 Read Mark 10:50: "...Throwing off his cloak, he...came to Jesus..." Can you recall an occasion or situation when it took an act of will on your part, a special effort, to live up to your best intuitions or hopes for yourself? A time when you were not afraid to stand up and be counted, even if it was only for a moment? Jot down a reminder of this.

5 Read Mark 10:51: "...Jesus said, "What do you want me to do for you?"..."My teacher, let me see again..." Can you recall an occasion or situation in your life when you first offered yourself to another, to God or to another human being, taking the risk of being turned down or rejected? A time or occasion when you opened yourself in vulnerability to another, taking the risk that you would be revealing your own wounds or weakness or shortcomings, but opening yourself anyhow? Write it down.

6 Read Mark 10:51-52a: ..."Go; your faith has made you well..." Can you recall a situation in your life when you were really filled with the Spirit: a mountaintop experience? A moment when all of life's goodness and grandeur and beauty seemed to pour in upon you? A moment when you felt absolutely convinced of God's presence and love? A moment of real spiritual exhilaration or inspiration; a religious "high"? Note one such time on your paper.

7 Read Mark 10:52b: "...He followed [Jesus] on the way..." Can you recall an experience in your life when you first became aware that life at its fullest includes the nitty-gritty of responsibility, as well as the mountaintop moments? When you first understood that religious faith means plodding through the ambiguities and compromises of life? Earning a living? Getting along with the family, co-workers, neighbours? That kind of thing. When you first became aware that the life of faith could include responsibility and discipline? And perhaps even pain or suffering, as well as glory? List such moments.

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D Take some minutes to review your entire autobiography. One item in each category is sufficient. But try to note at least one. Reflect on the total trajectory of your life. Is there anything you have written in answer to 1 - 7 that surprises you? Is there a specific "word" for you now, today, in any of the above?

E Spend a final moment in offering a brief prayer. Or you might choose to pray this prayer from the Sixth Sunday of Easter, year B, on page 34 in Evangelical Lutheran Worship:

F "O God, you have prepared for those who love you joys beyond understanding. Pour into our hearts such love for you that, loving you above all things, we may attain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

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