

This PREVIEW booklet includes five abridged selections from the daily reflections in *A Grounded Faith: Reconnecting with Creator and Creation in the Season of Lent*. Find more information at <http://www.ecofaithrecovery.org/lenten-devotional-2022/>



A GROUNDED FAITH

Reconnecting with Creator and Creation in the Season of Lent

A Lenten companion to
***Becoming Rooted: One Hundred Days
of Reconnecting with Sacred Earth***
by Dr. Randy Woodley (Broadleaf, 2022)

Introduction

The writers of *A Grounded Faith: Reconnecting with Creator and Creation in the Season of Lent* invite you into a journey inspired by the wisdom of Dr. Randy Woodley and his new book, *Becoming Rooted: One Hundred Days of Reconnecting with Sacred Earth*. This devotional, *A Grounded Faith*, is intended to be a Lenten companion to *Becoming Rooted*, although it can also be used as a standalone Lenten resource. Each week in the devotional is tied to one or more of the ten sections of *Becoming Rooted*. Each day's devotion begins with a quote from Scripture and a quote from *Becoming Rooted*, continues with a reflection by the writer, and concludes with an invitation for the reader to engage with the material presented.

This devotional is an invitation to reclaim the possibility of becoming more rooted in your place, of remembering your own deep-time indigeneity, and of learning from Indigenous people who live in the land where you now reside. It is an invitation to repent from destructive ways of understanding and practicing our Christian faith and of living as twenty-first-century Americans. It is an invitation to participate in world-healing practices that are faithful to the One who showed us the way out of the tomb and into abundant life. It is a joy to be invited into your Lenten season.

First Week of Lent: Ash Wednesday

Becoming Rooted, Day 8, “The Harmony Way”

You are dust, and to dust you will return.

—Genesis 3:19

The harmony way is a meaningful whole.... The wisdom of Indigenous traditions and stories emphasizes the importance of restoring the relationships that exist among Creator, humans, animals, and the Earth—what I call the community of creation.

—Randy Woodley, *Becoming Rooted*, 25–26

In 2014, the Wilderness Way Community invited people into a Lenten practice of praying outside for forty days. That first Ash Wednesday, I invited my family to do the imposition of ashes—outside. As I was making the cross of ashes on my, then, five-year-old’s forehead, I said, “Remember that you are dust...” and before I could finish with “...and to dust you shall return,” he jumped in with, “No! We aren’t dust; we are stardust!” Out of the mouths of babes. Indeed we are, my son, indeed we are.

The next year, I was helping lead an Ash Wednesday service at the Festival of Radical Discipleship in Oak View, California. The ashes were made of sage from the valley, a valley that exploded in flame two years later in the massive Thomas Fire. In that service, I spoke these words, “Today we receive the sign of the cross with ashes made from burned sage from a valley burning in drought. These ashes are a call to repentance. A call to turn around, to turn again to the very ground of our being and ask: God, how do I live here? Right here? Right now? In this watershed? And in this watershed moment? Remind me, O God, that I am not just dust in general (though our transient, mobile, disconnected-from-place culture might have me believe that). No. To the extent that I drink the water from my watershed, eat the food from my watershed, breathe the air of my watershed, will be buried in my watershed, ‘I am my watershed, and to my watershed, I shall return.’ So that is what you will hear today as you receive the sign of the cross in ashes on your foreheads. ‘You are your watershed, and to your watershed, you shall return.’”

And finally, 2016. Again I wrangled my family for a homemade imposition of ashes ritual outside. But we had no ashes handy. So, instead, standing at the base of our two-hundred-year-old fir tree, acknowledging the sacredness of this ancestral land not our own, we each leaned over, rubbed our fingers in the dirt, and made the sign of the cross on one another’s foreheads. “You are Earth, and to Earth you will return.”

Second Week of Lent: Thursday

Becoming Rooted, Day 26, “Intentional Relationship”

The truth of the matter is, unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. If you love your life you'll lose it; if you hate your life in this world you'll keep it for eternal life.

—John 12:24–25

With my first bite of food, I think about what I am eating. I understand the sacrifice made by the plant or the animal to give me life. My life is connected to their death. There is a sacred relationship between myself and the food I eat.

—Randy Woodley, *Becoming Rooted*, 67–68

One fresh morning, as I sat quietly, I noticed an array of sounds that I can only call eating sounds. The birds were pecking at the bark of the Scots Pine tree, and other sounds I didn't recognize were likely the sounds of insects eating their breakfast. Munch, munch, munch. And suddenly, something clicked for me. Oh my God, I thought, the world is always feeding! The world is always eating and being eaten. The world is always COMMUNING!

Real mystics know that sacraments don't only happen in church. Real mystics know that the world itself is sacrament—a visible sign of an invisible grace—an ongoing revelation of the WORD made FLESH. When Jesus offers his body as bread for the world, he offers us a portal into the mind-blowing realization that everything that is, is God enfleshed. For Christians, Jesus is simply the human revelation of the God who feeds the world from her own body.

Feeding is a sacrificial act of love. Ask any mother nursing her infant. Jesus' desire to nourish the world to eternal life led to the cross. Many Indigenous people believe that animals and plants willingly sacrifice their lives to nourish other life forms, including humans. To maintain the balance, humans need to offer sacrifices to the spirits of these animals in thanksgiving for their sacrifice. I don't understand these mysteries, but I do know that God created a world in which love and sacrifice, eating and being eaten, are inescapable. Can I see God in all that feeds me? Can I share the life of God in all that I feed?

When have you loved another sacrificially? Identify five beings that are making a sacrifice for your well-being today.

Third Week of Lent: Tuesday

Becoming Rooted, Day 33, “Caretakers”

Praise YHWH from the earth, you sea creatures and ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and mist, and storm winds that fulfill God’s word, mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small animals and flying birds...!

—Psalm 148:7–10

If the help of Indigenous peoples is to be sought, actions are needed now. Confession of the wrongs done to Indigenous peoples around the world must include acts of restitution, restoration, and empowerment.

—Randy Woodley, *Becoming Rooted*, 84

When my Auntie Pa’iaina was a young girl living in Hilo, Hawaii, she was so excited for Sunday School and to share the verse she was given to memorize. She was especially excited because she had some insight that brought her verse to life. The excitement was building as each child shared their verse. Finally, it was Auntie’s turn. She stood proudly and proclaimed, “Jesus said, ‘I am the poi of life,’” but she was surprised by her Sunday School teacher’s response. Her teacher flicked her on the lips with her finger and sternly replied, “That’s wrong. Jesus is not the poi of life; Jesus is the bread of life.” My aunt was so embarrassed.

Poi is the byproduct of kalo or taro when it is pounded. Kalo is part of the Hawaiian creation story and is referred to as the root of life. The stalk that grows from the kalo is called oha, from which the word ‘ohana (family) is derived. Kalo reminds Hawaiians that we are related to not only the kalo but all of creation. Poi has also been an important staple that has sustained Hawaiians for centuries. So when Auntie said, “Jesus is the poi of life,” she knew what she was talking about.

The truth is that Indigenous peoples knew the Creator long before the missionaries arrived with their Bible. Throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms, the land, the kalo, rivers, oceans, birds, wild animals, cattle, and small creatures testify of the Creator’s presence. Most Indigenous cultures acknowledge the Uncreated Creator. Native Americans have lived as hosts on this land in partnership with creation for over 15,000 years. Americans have occupied this land for less than three hundred years, and you don’t have to look far to see we are in trouble. Maybe it’s time to decolonize Christianity and learn from Indigenous peoples what Creator has taught them, like what my Auntie knew: Jesus is the poi of life.

Fifth Week of Lent: Sunday

Becoming Rooted, Day 56, “Individualism”

After John’s arrest, Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God: “This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Change your hearts and minds, and believe this Good News!”

—Mark 1:14-15

One of the traits Western humans seem to have laid aside somewhere is cooperation for the good of the group—the common good, as some call it.... We might be the most individualistic society in the history of the world.

—Randy Woodley, *Becoming Rooted*, 135-136

April 4th is the anniversary of the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Appropriately, most years this tragic anniversary falls during the season of Lent. After one of his arrests, while he sat in a Birmingham jail cell, King wrote a long letter to White pastors on the margins of a newspaper and smuggled it out to get it published. In his letter from a Birmingham jail, Dr. King articulated a profound spiritual conviction that is both biblical and non-Western:

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied together into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

Dr. King’s letter challenged White pastors and their congregations to repent. In the writings of the ancient historian Josephus, repentance (Greek *metanoia*) described someone changing sides during a time of war. Those who repented did not only change their mind. They openly broke rank with the team they had been fighting for. Someone who repented was a traitor!

Dr. King challenged White Christians to break rank with a Western “progress” obsessed with personal piety and individual rights—a “progress” that came at the expense of the common good. When King reminded White folks and middle-class people that they were caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, he was not only recruiting them to join the Black freedom struggle, but also beckoning them to break rank with a worldview that made them more defensive, depressed, lonely, anxious, controlling, competitive, oblivious and entitled. King was offering folks what we all need to heal and recover. What Randy Woodley calls “the harmony way.”

We break rank with the Western worldview so that we can become something different. As Black southern writer Imani Perry wrote to White people in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, “If you join us, you might feel not only our pain but also the beauty of being human.”

Seventh Week of Lent: Holy Saturday

Becoming Rooted, Day 90, “Original Instructions”

This much have I said to you while still with you; but the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit whom Abba God will send in my name, will instruct you in everything and she will remind you of all that I told you.

—John 14:25-26

I think, whether by divine decree or as human experience evolved—or maybe both—all indigenous people, everywhere, came to understand something from their interactions with the Earth: that living in harmony is the best way to live and,...the only way to live that will sustain us into a hopeful future.

—Randy Woodley, *Becoming Rooted*, 219

How's this for a crucifixion story? In the summer of 1991, twenty-five miles off the Northwest Coast of Washington State, a Chinese freighter collided with the Japanese fishing vessel Tenyo Maru. When this happened, the Tenyo Maru quickly sank, but as it did it began releasing hundreds of thousands of gallons of fuel directly into the ocean, and most of this ended up coating the shores of Washington State and parts of Oregon.

I was a teenager at the time, but I remember this incident very well. I remember seeing the spill, seeing how much of the coastal wildlife it was killing, and some part of me just seized up. A deep despair washed over me, a feeling of inevitability and hopelessness, and for much of my life the image of that oil spill worked inside me as a kind of archetypal placeholder for all the human-made horrors I felt completely powerless at stopping.

But how's this for a resurrection story? Did you know that there is something called an Oyster Mushroom, which grows throughout North America, and which has the unique, naturally occurring ability to clean up oil spills by leaching them up as food? And did you also know that these same mushrooms, once grown by eating up all the oil, are still completely edible for humans to eat?

The thought of these little oil-eating mushrooms resonated with me so deeply that I saw in a vision the whole beach back in Washington State entirely covered with them. And this vision shifted something deep inside me, some old wound healed over. For the first time in I don't know how long, I knew that God was going to deliver us. The road might be rocky, but I became filled with certainty and deep relief that the planet is still producing the miracles it needs to survive, and so can we.

Like Oyster Mushrooms, let us learn how to practice resurrection, transmuting death into life, becoming food for a hungry world.

About the Authors

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Tommy Airey (Week Five) was born and raised in stolen, unceded land that Acjachemen people call Panhe (South Orange County, CA) and is being transformed by the thin place the Potawatomie, Ojibwe, Huron and Odawa named Wawiiatanong (Detroit, MI). Tommy is the co-editor of *RadicalDiscipleship.net* and the author of *Descending Like a Dove: Adventures in Decolonizing Evangelical Christianity* (2018).

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