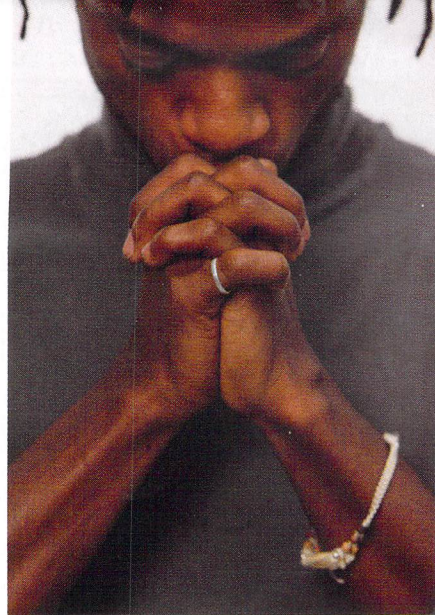


17 activists and church leaders talk about the disciplines that keep them girded for the struggle.



# Sustains Me

## Seek Goodness in All

by Angela Glover Blackwell



I remind myself while spending time with people in the airport or on the bus that at the core, people are always nicer than they seem. It is important to do this because sometimes

the problems that we are trying to correct seem overwhelming and the reality that we are trying to create seems out of reach. I am a hopeful person so I try to reinforce for myself that the goodness is there, and it is my job to help people see an issue they haven't thought about, or see a path they haven't thought of before. Constantly finding that goodness in people keeps me grounded.

*Angela Glover Blackwell is the founder and chief executive officer of PolicyLink.*

## Say Thank You, by Vincent Harding



I seek out quiet whenever I can, wherever I am. Another spiritual discipline is to just practice being grateful. I spend a lot of time saying thank you, because my life has been so rich and I know that the richness has been a gift, most often a divine gift through very human beings. I cannot do anything else but say thank you. That's central to my practice.

*Vincent Harding is professor emeritus of religion and social transformation at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver.*

## Let Jesus Love You, by Tony Campolo



I try to start each day by setting aside about 20 minutes for centering prayer. I empty my mind of the 101 things that are apt to start spinning in my head the moment I wake up. Then, focusing on Jesus, I let him love me. I wait to feel myself enveloped by his presence. I silently yield to being saturated by his Spirit. In my morning prayers, I say nothing to God and I hear no words from God. But in these times of "waiting upon the Lord," my spiritual strength is renewed.

Secondly, at the end of each day I practice the Ignatian prayer of examen. Lying in bed I reflect on all the good and God-honoring things that I did during the day and thank God for allowing me to be an instrument of love and peace. Following Philippians 4:8, I remember whatever I did that was true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise. Only then, after such affirmation, am I prepared to review the day a second time, recalling everything I said that was hurtful to others and fell short of God's will. In accord with what I read in 1 John 1:9, I ask not only for God's forgiveness, but also for God's cleansing. I ask Christ to reach out from Calvary, across time and space, and absorb out of me the sin and darkness that accumulated within me during the day.

I believe that because the Holy Spirit is holy, the Holy Spirit is frustrated coming to dwell in dirty temples. Thus, Christ's cleansing of my temple at the end of the day is a requisite for receiving the infilling of Christ's Spirit during centering prayer the next morning. Without Christ's Spirit in me, I lose heart and lack the energy to do justice and evangelism.

*Tony Campolo, professor emeritus at Eastern University, is founder of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education.*

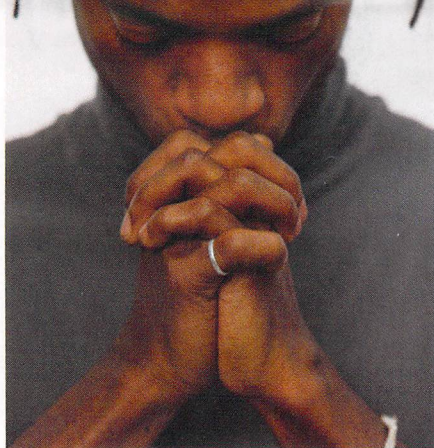
## Open Yourself to Community, by Soong-Chan Rah



When we're in places of activism, we tend to be unable to look or reflect inward. One practice I've really attempted is to be in places of community where I'm challenged not just to think outside of the typical ways of thinking, but where my spiritual life is challenged. I've been really blessed to have some mentors in my life who have spoken to me about my intellectual and pastoral development. But what has been most helpful to me is how they've addressed my spiritual development. They've spoken to me about the ways that the work that I do is also tied into who I am in Christ.

*Soong-Chan Rah is assistant professor of church growth and evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Illinois.*





## Schedule God-Time on Your iPhone

by Vicky Beeching



It's quite hard when you're on the road a lot to keep that fire burning, but I think God's made it very clear to me that unless I'm in that secret place with God, knowing God privately, what I do publicly will not be worth anything. So for me it's just a matter of making the time in my schedule. For example, anybody who has a business meeting would put it in their planner or iPhone (I'm an iPhone geek), and that's what I do. I have to plan that time with God and not let anything steal it away.

It's been hard over the last five years. I haven't managed it every day like I'd like to, but I try to make it a reality every day of my life and lock-in time with God as though I was meeting with President Obama or the Queen of England. We wouldn't ever blow them off, would we?

*Vicky Beeching is a worship leader and songwriter.*

## Find a Prayer Partner

by Tony Hall



We have a tendency in our lives to think we have the answer, and we never stop to ask God. We go forward and do our own thing, and when we get in trouble, that's when we ask God to help us out. It's a little bit late. So I try to bring God into the process early.

I take a prayer partner with me to all of the places I go in the world. If I go to North Korea, or Appalachia, or the Congo, I take a prayer partner. We get up and pray every morning and try to start the day off right, be accountable to one another, and find out what the Lord is telling us to do there.

*Former U.S. ambassador Tony Hall was a member of Congress for nearly 24 years.*

## Stick Your Face in the Bible, by Richard Stearns



One of the things I try to do with regularity is to just stick my face in the Bible and read it, because I think we constantly have to be reminded about what Christ called us to do. He called us to stand up for justice in our world, to care for the downtrodden and the least of these. He called us to a life of generosity and sacrifice on behalf of other people. The more you read scripture, the more you see that it wasn't supposed to be one big party where we all feel good about being saved and being loved by God, but that we are supposed to pay it forward. The scriptures energize me and help me recommit to the work that I do on behalf of the poor.

Also, when you're dealing with problems that seem hopeless, prayer can give you a sense of strength that is supernatural. I think it can be discouraging for those of us who take on these lonely social causes, and sometimes we feel like we're the only ones who care about these issues. We won't be able to save every vulnerable child on planet earth, unfortunately, but we need to celebrate the lives that we've changed because of our actions, our prayers, and our efforts.

*Richard Stearns is president of World Vision, one of the largest nonprofit organizations in the United States.*

## Give It Away, by Donald Miller



I'm an artist and so discipline is not my strength. But one of the things that I love to do is to give. I think a lot of young people don't often give, but a percentage of every dollar that comes in I give to God. And that has done nothing but bless my life! It has just been awesome. There are times when I wonder how I'm going to pay my mortgage next month, but I promise you this, since I've given, every year has been a more joyful year. I have friends who are in bondage over money. I see money as an evil that can really entangle you. So being able to give governs the rest of your life.

Giving also affects my work, because now I'm not working for me. Now, I'm working for something else, and it charges my work. It sounds weird and I feel like an old Southern Baptist pastor, but giving is important. When talking about ending poverty, we have to realize we are rich and it's important to give.

*Donald Miller is a New York Times best-selling author in Portland, Oregon.*

## Allow God to Speak

by Joel Edwards



I'm amazed to have discovered this about myself because I thought I was quite an introverted, contemplative type, but I'm not, actually. I'm an activist. I've had to learn how to carry God with me in the rough-and-tumble of all that I'm up to. I like the opportunities I get to sit in one place and have my feet on the ground and find the time to allow God to speak to me personally. I also like the personal discipline of walking gently through the word of God and to let it speak to me in personal places. I believe in accountability and try to make sure I'm at my local church. More recently, I've locked myself into monthly meetings with my local pastor who seems to have an ability to know where I am and what I'm doing. I sit with him and we reflect together on the things I'm experiencing that have been difficult.

*Joel Edwards is the international director of Micah Challenge.*

## Feed Yourself

by Vashti McKenzie



One of the first questions I asked my pastor when I acknowledged my call into the ministry was, "Who ministers to the minister?" My pastor said to me, "If you don't answer that question, then you are in danger of burning out very easily." So when you are in a position of leadership like I am, you have to be very determined and decided about how you feed yourself, and it comes through prayer and it comes through worship. I'm in a position where I lead worship and where people expect to receive from me, but I have to make a very conscious effort to be in a position where I hear the word of God and allow the word of God to minister to me.

*Vashti Murphy McKenzie is the first female bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.*



## Build Community

by Rachel Anderson



There is no such thing as advocacy or activism outside of community. Building community is at the very heart of where we meet with God. At the Faith and Justice Network,

we always said that our recognition of our interdependence on one another is a way of reminding us of our dependence of God. I think God calls us into justice work and gifts us with all the diverse gifts and everything we need to do advocacy.

The second thing is the discipline of prayer and discipleship. I find the Anglican tradition and the monastic tradition, the writings of Thomas Merton, life-giving and a space where you can really remember that God is active among us.

*Rachel Anderson coordinates faith outreach at the Center for Responsible Lending in Washington, D.C., and was co-founder of the Boston Faith and Justice Network.*

## Reach Deep

by Alexie Torres-Fleming



I wish I could say I have a very disciplined prayer life, but that comes and goes. But I have a very deep contemplative life. While I may not exercise formal prayer, I constantly feel

and know that I am in God's presence and in communication with God. I love the mystical tradition of the church, so a lot of my prayer includes reading Teresa of Avila or Dorothy Day, who were able to navigate this work but were also able to reach very deep within themselves and understand a very powerful truth—that sometimes it's not just about God's word but it's just about God.

*Alexie Torres-Fleming is the founder and executive director of Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in the South Bronx.*

## Stay on Speaking Terms with Jesus, by Frederick Haynes



Prayer is primary. Jesus said pray always, and I try to stay in a constant state of prayer consciousness where the Lord and I are always on speaking terms. I also do all I can to feed my mind in a meditative fashion. I read books that really feed me and show me where God is trying to take me, not to mention the importance of sitting down and reading scripture. I like to go through the book of Psalms, as well as the gospels. Psalms soothe and help my soul to sing. To go through the gospels and walk with Jesus in my quiet moments is grounding, energizing, and replenishes my ministry.

*Frederick Haynes is senior pastor of Friendship-West Baptist Church in Dallas.*

## Practice Sacred Travel, by Eugene Cho



This is not exactly your classic Franciscan discipline, but I'm very intentional about traveling—sometimes just to be alone, and sometimes intentionally placing myself in situations that I feel are really going to stretch me. It's not your classic grounding discipline, but it's really important for me because it's so easy to get consumed by certain perceptions, by Western ideologies of what it means to be a successful pastor. Traveling really helps keep me grounded.

*Eugene Cho is founding and lead pastor of Quest Church in Seattle.*

## Let Yourself Be Known, by John Perkins



I have a small body of people who really know me, because people who really know you help you with your own mood. They can see when you're dry, when you're anxious, when you're mad. I remember the other day I was doing a talk and I got very mad, and my words must have been very tough. As soon as I got home one of my board members called and asked, "What went wrong? You got so angry." Meaning, I had gotten so angry, I was messing things up, and I had to think about that. So my friends help me.

*John Perkins is co-founder of the Christian Community Development Association.*

## Take a Silent Retreat, by Lisa Sharon Harper



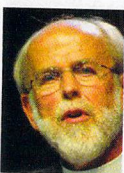
A great mentor of mine once asked me, "How's your prayer life?" At that point I told him it was not too good. He recommended that I have a daily prayer life. Whenever I find it hard to journal—which is how I pray to God on paper—if I'm too stopped up to pray, I'll actually grab a lectionary such as *The Book of Prayers* and I will literally read the prayers of the saints.

Those prayers anchor me in times when I just cannot do it.

Another practice of mine is to take retreats of silence. Whenever I have done that, it has ended up being this window that I have forced myself to walk through where God gets permission to speak into my soul. Activists run at 100 miles an hour, 24/7, and when we're sleeping we're dreaming about the issues we fight for. In order to get space for God to speak, I have to take a retreat of silence.

*Lisa Sharon Harper is co-founder and executive director of New York Faith and Justice.*

## Practice Public Lament, by Mark Hanson



Because it's so easy to get isolated in this role and take on the illusion that it all depends upon me, my spiritual practices are most renewing when they are done in community. Those days when I can gather in community to pray morning prayer and sing evensong, to hear the word proclaimed, and to taste the bread and the wine of Christ's presence, then I am most renewed. I am reminded that this is the community of Christ's body, not Mark Hanson, bishop, and individual believer in Jesus.

I also try to practice the spiritual discipline of public lament and repentance. Walter Brueggemann says public lament gives social form to our suffering, and as a public leader I often engage in public acts of repentance toward those who are living in poverty and who have so often been scorned and forgotten by those in religious communities. So I've publicly washed the feet of those who live in poverty as a public act of repentance. It brings me to tears. It's a much more honest assessment that I have not been a good steward of my power, and I think it's a much more Christ-like place to be.

*Mark Hanson is the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.*