

Music: [00:00:12](#) [inaudible].

Josh Mangelson: [00:00:17](#) Welcome to the Project Zion podcast. This podcast explores the unique spiritual and theological gifts community of Christ offers for today's world.

Brittany: [00:00:34](#) Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of Project Zion podcast. This is Brittany and I will be your host for this episode and today we are going to bring you another episode in our Holy Grounds series, which is about spiritual practices. Today's episode is going to be a little bit different in some of our other holy ground series. We usually just kind of stick to one spiritual practice and walk through that practice with a single person, but today I have on Roy Otteson who is in a spiritual direction training program with the Franciscan Spiritual Center out of Portland, Oregon. So I wanted to get Roy on to talk about her program a little bit as well as her background was spiritual formation and spiritual direction growing up LDS and then what it looks like now that she's a member of Community of Christ and is part of this program.

Brittany: [00:01:24](#) So we're not necessarily going to focus on one particular spiritual practice, but just the idea of spiritual formation at large. So Roy, thank you so much for being on today.

Royleane: [00:01:35](#) Thank you so much for having me. Brittany. I'm really passionate about this topic. I love spiritual direction companionship and what it's done, the changes it's helped in my life. So I'm grateful to be here today to discuss this with you.

Brittany: [00:01:48](#) Yeah, and you know, one of the reasons why I wanted this episode to happen, particularly with Roy, is because we've talked a little bit about spiritual formation and spiritual direction. We actually just did a women's retreat together up at Samish campground. And it was, it was based on spiritual formation and it was just a small, intimate little group of a really of LDS women who are searching for more of that in their religious experience, whether they're active LDS or they've walked away to some degree or another or they're seeking community Christ.

Brittany: [00:02:23](#) There was a whole variety of women there just trying to rebuild their spiritual foundation. So it was interesting because I realized a lot of the spiritual practices and my concept of spiritual formation that I had in my former faith community look very different from what it looks like now. So I hope to just kind of talk a little bit about that with you, Roy and I'm curious to know, you know, what spiritual formation or what spiritual

practices looks like, you know, maybe 10, 15, 20 years ago for you and then what it looks like today. And then just to hear a little bit about your program. So, okay, let's just dive on in. So I guess let's start with a basic foundational definition of what we're talking about before we dive into past lives and present lives and future lives. What are we talking about when we say spiritual formation?

Royleane: [00:03:16](#)

So spiritual formation and, and the practice, the spiritual direction I would say has basically been around probably since human beings have been here. It is basically trying to listen to your voice inside and to figure out what types of things, what things help you be connected to one another, to the earth, to God, to the divine and how the divine basically speaks through you. And basically in the middle, like around the years, 400 or so, there was this whole movement in the early Christian Church that men and women were kind of pushing against the norms of society, which was that they had to have families and had to be part of these very dominating cultures and they didn't want that. They wanted to have freedom and independence. And so they would go out to these places and kind of live a life of hermitage on their own at the desert fathers and mothers is what they referred to them as.

Royleane: [00:04:30](#)

And as more and more people started seeking this, like this was another option instead of living the cultural norm, they realized that it would be really helpful to have somebody who's done this, who's been here before, just companioning and helping as we're trying to figure out where is my place in this life, where is the divine calling me? What is my purpose? And so that's where the whole spiritual direction started. Spiritual formation, spiritual practices I believe is just within us. I feel like it's in our DNA. It's something that, that we just do. We're trying to connect with one another and trying to connect with the earth and trying to connect with the divine. And I feel like people have been doing it through rituals, through different practices. And we have been told through the years that there's only certain ways to do it sometimes and I think as the conversation goes along, we realize that each of us have different ways of doing it. And there's not just one way of any of those things.

Brittany: [00:05:33](#)

I really appreciate that the last thought that you brought to us that spiritual practices and spiritual formation can look different for different people and what resonates with one person doesn't necessarily have to resonate with another. And I remember learning about the desert fathers and mothers in seminary recently and to realize that they were acting as, I mean, it was a radical resistance. You know, it was very counter-

cultural. And I just think that my perception of even Catholic nuns now or priests, you know, any sort of clergy that might take a vow of celibacy or isolation and go live somewhere else and not have a family. I used to look at that and just completely not understand it, but then to know when the tradition started and to look at what was going on as far as marriage goes and how it was just kind of a transaction of property, meaning women, but to reject that and to go live with God and isolation, there's something really, really beautiful about that. So I love that the history is just so rich of just being counter-cultural.

Royleane: [00:06:43](#) Yeah. And I, I love it. It's very radical, is very radical and I really admire them. I used to feel the same way. Brittany's, I would actually see that and think, oh, that's really sad. They're not going to have a family or they're not going to have this certain life. And when you learn about the history of all of it and what it came out of your allies, that's extremely radical. That's their way of saying, no, I'm going to do it my way. I'm not going to do what you tell me I have to do. And actually there were a lot, I mean it was huge for women to be able to do that. They would give, it was very upsetting to their families because they would have a dowery and part of basically taking the vows to become a nun or to live in these monasteries or in these communities at that time was you basically gave your entire dowery away to the poor. And so the families, it just made them feel upset because, you know, they basically are saying, I don't want any attachment. I don't want you to have any say over me or attachment over me and I'm giving all of this money to the poor and I'm going to go live in this community with these women. And it was extremely a very feminist radical thing to do.

Brittany: [00:07:48](#) For sure. So Roy, I'm interested, let's talk about your background a little bit. I'm curious to know if spiritual practices or spiritual formation has always been part of your religious practice and then what that looks like and I'm particularly curious to know because you mentioned again that spiritual practices can look different for everyone. So did you, have you always felt liberated, I guess, uh, to search out different spiritual practices or what did that spiritual life look like when you were growing up and as an adult, etc?

Royleane: [00:08:24](#) Well, I grew up, um, in an LDS family. I was an only child. My parents raised me, um, LDS and my mother was a convert when she was in college. My father had been raised all the gas and from the time I was really little, it was, instilled within me some of the basic core spiritual practices that they use in the LDS church. You know, reading your scriptures, saying your prayers, this is how you pray. Um, temple attendance or that was very,

you know, to attend the temple someday. And also very much, I would say, family dinner and prayer around family dinners and at that time together and just being going and attending and being part of the community. So I, when I was really, when I was growing up, I grew up in Los Angeles a town called Pacific Palisades was on the coast.

Royleane: [00:09:25](#) And in my high school there were I think, close to 3000 kids and there were only five of us who were LDS. And so I had a lot of friends. I was friends with the LDS kids and appreciated that foundation. But I was also friends with a lot of people from other faiths and religions and I've always enjoyed it since I was young conversations of call it kind of interfaith curiosity, uh, conversations with others about how they lived their life with God and what practices worked for them. And my parents would take me to, I would go to my friends, um, Catholic confirmations and I would go to my friend's Bar Mitzvahs and Bat Mitzvahs. And, um, my mom for a time married when my parents got divorced she married a man who was Jewish and so we would go to synagogue and then we would do the Friday Shabbat meal at our house.

Royleane: [00:10:22](#) And so I was exposed to a lot of different ways of doing different spiritual practices. And saw, kind of figured out, I think when I was pretty young that all of these ways are ways of people connecting to God and their various traditions. So from the time I was little, my parents used to listen to me. I was very curious as I said about interfaith and I, I've always pretty much been a kid that read her scriptures, said her prayers and the thing, especially when I became a teenager, my spiritual practice was I would do what I would call a walk, walk and talk to God or even sometimes walk and lament with God, you know, kind of yell at the sky or the ocean or whatever. I'm trying to figure out where my path is taking me. So those are some spiritual practices I had when I was young.

Brittany: [00:11:14](#) I really appreciate hearing that. Sounds like you were much more open than I was as a kid growing up in Provo. I probably could count the non-Mormon friends that I knew of or the Non Mormon students in my high school on two hands, maybe even one. So I was not exposed to virtually anything else outside of my little bubble. So it does give me hope to know that in other areas of the world, they might be a little more open than say Provo Utah is.

Royleane: [00:11:46](#) But you know, it's always the joke, right? I'd go see my cousins in Utah and they'd be like, oh great, the weird California Mormons are coming. And we'd be like, oh gosh, we got to go

hang out with a weird Utah Mormon. Definitely different types of Mormons.

- Brittany: [00:12:04](#) Ah, it is, it is true. Yeah. I did not have any sort of exposure or really, I mean my mom would watch different documentaries and things like that on occasion, but you know, and I'd be in the next room or whatever. But yeah, as far as exposure to other world religions, I had very, very little of that, which I think actually impacted my thoughts on spiritual practices because for me, just your standard reading your scriptures, saying your prayer, those kinds of things were done in my home. But beyond that I really wasn't exposed to anything else. So anything beyond that usually that I've encountered has been a little uncomfortable at first cause I'm like, okay, I can, I can get over my discomfort. Just because this isn't my norm doesn't mean I can't enjoy it eventually.
- Royleane: [00:12:51](#) I will say that I appreciated all seeing all the different practices, but definitely while I was a young girl and forming my testimony within the LDS church and the narrative that was given to me that it was the one true church. When I would go and experiences these other religious practices, I did have that lens on. So it was interesting to me in a steely super connecting with God, but I sometimes was uncomfortable or thought it was strange or thought, oh, it's, it's too bad they have the wrong way of doing it, right? Like there was definitely some pride. Um, sometimes when I would go and observe those things.
- Brittany: [00:13:32](#) Yeah. I remember even hearing other religions or congregations, even community of Christ singing, um, you know, I've talked about this little church history tour that I went on before and yeah, I remember encountering Community of Christ singing, etc. at different spots in Nauvoo and Kirtland and kind of thinking like, oh well they're singing The Spirit of God, but too bad it's with the wrong authority.
- Royleane: [00:13:59](#) Yes. And I, I feel like I definitely remember that as I, as I hit like my teen years, which I think is very normal in, um, if you look at Fowler's stages of faith and your faith formation, that it's very normal to kind of be in you. As you're doing that faith, you kind of hit a place where you think you have all the answers and you know it all. And that's very normal. And, and the point is for God to break through that with you, right. And to continue to learn and it makes the circle wider. Sometimes we get stuck in, I know it all and we don't move past that. So like I, I sat with my grandmother, my grandmother took me to her Methodist church and we were really sad in some ways that she joined the

Methodist church cause we'd been with her to the LDS church quite a few times and thought maybe we should join that.

- Royleane: [00:14:49](#) But she joined the Methodist Church and I sitting watching the sermon and then passing the plate and stuff. And I sat and read my Book of Mormon the whole time because whatever they were saying was [inaudible] not going to spiritually lead me as an f. And so I needed the Book of Mormon for that. And I remember watching the way they are doing things, I'm thinking, oh, I'm just so sad. They're just doing it wrong. And I think about it all the time. I was like, grammy, I am so sorry. I, you know, I was so judgemental. So just finalize the teen and um, she was so nice. She tried it. I remember having a conversation with her about why she joined the Methodist Church and she said, you want to know why? She said, I went to go visit their service and they sent me a card in the mail saying how grateful they were that I came and brought my presence to their church. And she thought, oh, they like me and, and they want me there. And so she started going to church. So really it was the practice of hospitality that the Methodists are doing and that me and my grandmother feel like she was welcome and needed in that community.
- Brittany: [00:15:57](#) That's really beautiful. And I have to say that don't be too hard on your teenage self cause we've all been,
- Royleane: [00:16:03](#) Yeah we all have, I just laugh at it. I have teams now and I just go, oh yeah, I remember that.
- Brittany: [00:16:11](#) So Roy, with all these spiritual practices that you mentioned and experiences that you had growing up, I'm curious to know if the LDS temple was incorporated in your spiritual practice as a positive thing or a negative thing. Cause I know that among ex-Mormons or Latter-day Seekers, there's quite a variety of opinions and thoughts on that. And I think that maybe you and I have had different experiences there, but I also think that it's probably because you grew up being more open to different ideas. And my concept of how I encountered God was very stagnant and stale. Um, so I think the temple was a little bit surprising and shocking to me, but I'm curious to know how it was for you.
- Royleane: [00:16:56](#) Yeah, well thanks for asking that question Brittany. I have had a lot of people just in discussions with our faith formation. I've actually heard a lot of people's stories that the temple was very difficult for them and disturbing for them. And I had a different experience with that from the time I was little. I also really wanted to go to the temple. I just thought it was the bee's

knees to be able to go in there. And part of it I think was my parents got divorced and I was six. And all of the things that are taught in there that your family can be still together forever. I think. I thought if I, if I go to the temple and keep my covenants and I've made there, then I can fix and solve this mess that my parents have sadly like that our family is in.

Royleane: [00:17:42](#)

So my father worked as public relations director for the church in California and his office is right behind the temple. And when I was a little girl, I love going to the temple cause if you see the temple in LA, there's more buildings built up now, but always you can see it off of I think is the 10 freeway as you're heading towards Los Angeles, downtown LA. And you look off and you see this gorgeous building on this huge piece of property in the middle of LA, which is so fascinating and different and interesting because there's so much chaos and it's so crowded there just to see. It's almost kind of like this oasis in the middle of chaos and craziness. And so we would go and just walk around the grounds when I was a little girl and I enjoyed the peacefulness that I felt on those grounds.

Royleane: [00:18:29](#)

And so when my dad worked there he started working there when I was a teen, I would go there all the time to see my dad behind the office and he was often working and I would walk the grounds and I told you for one of my spiritual practices was walking and talking with God. And I really felt, I would say closer to God or the Divine there are on those grounds because it was so quiet. And um, and the contrast between the chaos around it and the piece that were on the grounds really meant something to me, especially as a teenager with my chaotic life. And I could come here and feel peace. So I walked around the grounds and I loved it. And then I really wanted to go through the temple and when the first time my father taught the temple prep classes, and the best thing you could've done to prepare me for that was he said, read these few scriptures because it's pretty much what they talk about in the temple.

Royleane: [00:19:27](#)

And then he said, remember how you've gone to Catholic Church with your friends? And he said, you know how you stand up and sit down and stand up and sit down and we say the prayers, the wrote prayers. He said, well, we don't really have very much of that in Mormonism, but that's what you're going to get in the temple. He said, it's a ritual. And so just having your mind that, so because I had those things in my mind when I went in, I would say the first time I had initiatory was a little bit odd because a, it was before they made the changes so that I had just the shield on and they would touch you in different places. So that was a little bit odd for me. But but the, the actual

endowment itself didn't really freak me out because we were just doing a ritual, right?

Royleane: [00:20:14](#) It's standing up and sitting down. And the initial stories, I thought it was interesting because of the shield, but at the same time I was awestruck that there were women blessing me and I had no idea that that was even a possibility up until that point. So that part, I really appreciate it. And then when I went into the endowment and I saw, I went through the first time my fiance Steve was there and my parents were there and I saw these people I love that were in there. And so I was really excited to be in there and be part of this now with them. And um, yeah, I, so I didn't, the, the only thing I remember when I went into the celestial room for the first time, I was so excited to see all of my family there. Now I was in tears because remember I come from this broken home and even though my parents were divorced there, they both were in this celestial room with me and, and also see my family as well.

Royleane: [00:21:10](#) So that was really, really, really special. And I remember saying to Steve, the only thing that bothered me was that, hey, I noticed that eve doesn't speak after she leaves the garden. What's up with that? And so that's like the one kind of female thing that bothered me and always did the whole time I went. So Steve and I went once a week when we were engaged and then throughout my life at different times I would go more and I'd go last. And especially the last few years of my life, I had gotten in some good physical shape and I remember running around the Idaho Falls temple and thinking, all right, I've gotten myself in physical shape now it's time to get myself in spiritual shape. And I really made a point to go once a week. And the reason why is cause I would mainly go to initiatory is, and I had women blessing me and there was something about just kind of the meditation and the wrote like the ritual over and over again.

Royleane: [00:22:07](#) It put me in a meditative state. And I also liked putting my family's name on the prayer roll. I felt like it was something I could do right. I had faith that I was trying to do everything I could do to help my family be okay. So for me, yes, the temple totally works. It works for a really long time. And it wasn't until I was probably a year and a half into my faith transition or faith expansion that when my husband no longer was going with me and I realized that probably my kids would never be there with me. That I was in the temple one day and it just hit me that this is no longer a place, it no longer felt like God's house to me because 99% of the people in the world can't be in this house. And to me, God was bigger than that. And so it became a place

of exclusion instead of a place where I felt God. And so I walked out and I, I've never been back to the temple.

Brittany: [00:23:09](#) I just have to say good on your dad for explaining things. How he did great job. He did a great job. Um, he did a really good job and I wish he would've taught a bunch more people. Cause I hear a lot of people, I think, I think if they'd had my dad, they would've been more prepared. I, yeah. And cause the thing is that a realization of the high ritual for me was the number one point of discomfort. I did notice the inequality in the wording and in a few other things, but it was that the high ritual, because I remember parents, leaders, other family members talking down on other religions, they're like, oh, they, they have to wear these clergy robes or oh, they have to have these high rituals, or oh, they say repeated prayers and all these things as like, our church doesn't do that and that's one reason why, you know, we're the ones who church and then you go to the temple and that's all it is. And I was like, What is happening?

Royleane: [00:24:07](#) Yeah, it's very, very, it's very different than what you have in regular church. And I just, yeah, I, I loved going with Steve. We were talking about this last night. I'm like, how do you remember we s I said, the only part I loved about the endowment was making eyes at you. And smiley look is really separate sides. And he's like, oh, I was always so embarrassed and I had no idea. Like to me it was like, Ooh, we're flirting before we get to finally get to the celestial room, you know, and go have dinner. He was like, this is weird. So, um, yeah, my favorite part was definitely the initiatory and I, I enjoyed doing the endowment if I could have my husband there to flirt with.

Brittany: [00:24:51](#) Hilarious! But I do have to say that it is pretty cool being blessed by women for the first time. That was kind of a saving grace for me as far as my endowment experience goes. So really, I'm interested to know what spiritual practices resonate with you now. What ones do you find the most meaning in?

Royleane: [00:25:14](#) Well, you know, I kind of use the analogy that I was sitting in the road kind of just that these pieces shattered and trying to pick the map and figure out what pieces I could keep if any and what pieces, you know, new ones I needed to create to move forward. And the spiritual practice of walking and talking to God. You know, I had from the time I was very young and I would say I continue to do today. A lot of the times, a lot of days I go on what I would call like a walking meditation and just walk and kind of talk and work things out. So that one continues today. Uh, I don't do the type of prayer that I used to do, but every day I still have a meditation practice and a lot of people

compare meditation and prayer to the same, I would say when I was active LDS, it was more of a intercessory thank you for this kind of way we were taught, right? Like thank you for this, ask God for this name of Jesus Christ. Amen. And that is not my practice anymore. It's a meditation. And usually at the end of the meditation I basically say a prayer of gratitude and asking for me to basically help me be focused in the here and now and be my most present self that day. And then on top of meditation, I, it's kind of funny cause I, I used to love to read scriptures. I read scriptures every day. And so I find myself reading some type of spiritual nourishing reading in the morning and it varies. It can be Brenae Brown, it could be, uh, something from Barbara Brown Taylor. It could be, you know, a book so like a psychological book or spiritual book or whatever. Whatever's the, basically helping me kind of get focus for the day.

Royleane: [00:27:03](#) So I continue to do that as well. And then I would say I consider meals with my family, a spiritual practice, and we gathered together and say a prayer of gratitude for all the hands and everything that brought the food to our table. Um, and so to me that's, that's a spiritual practice then we try to do still. That's sometimes that's the only time we're all together as a family at is set meal times. And after I think I was talking to my spiritual director on time, I was talking to her, I was lamenting about not being able to go into the LDS temple anymore. Not that I didn't feel worthy to go, I just didn't, it wasn't speaking to me anymore. And, uh, wasn't a place that I felt like going anymore, but I still missed kind of having a sacred place to go to.

Royleane: [00:27:57](#) And she said, you know, I know you love that your walks, you love your walks in the forest and such. And she said, you know, you can make any place you are your sacred space, like your sacred place to go talk to God. So, you know, my husband, I, we've put in, made little rock alters, you know, a couple of places in the forest. And, uh, sometimes we visit very special places to us, special places where you have good memories and beautiful experiences together. I consider it holy experiences, you know, basically that's a temple experience to me. And so kinda like Barbara Brown Taylor's book and Altar in the World, I've found that I've kind of replaced, um, everything beautiful, all the beautiful spaces in places that we create together in community, in this world as the temple instead of having to actually go to a specific one place where it's quiet.

Brittany: [00:28:53](#) I love that because depending on where you are and what you're doing and where you're at with God, it sounds like

spiritual practices and particularly holy places and sacred spaces can change and adapt to fit where you're at.

Royleane: [00:29:08](#) Exactly. And I would say another spiritual practice. I don't think I used to think of it as this, but I definitely sitting and listening active listening and just listening to friends to their stories, to their pain and being present with them to be, that is a holy space anytime I have meaningful human interaction with others and I actually kind of do my schedule, trying to have my schedule around that. My work involves relationship and helping kids. I, I have it with that, but I've also found that I like to try and schedule time as well to be able to have moments to, you know, have lunch with friends and things like that and have meaningful conversations. So, and I've enjoy labyrinth walking as well and there's just all kinds. There's so many different things to try, but those are the main ones that I would say I incorporate, you know, pretty much on a weekly, a daily basis in my life at the moment and I'm totally open and understanding that they won't necessarily always work that way. And then I'm kind of an ever evolving creature with my spiritual practices.

Brittany: [00:30:24](#) Yeah. And I think that that's the most important thing, right? Is that it can change and that you're not bound to any specific practice, but that what works for you right now works for you right now and maybe you'll find something along the journey that will resonate with you in the future and you can change and grow and develop and adapt. I love it.

Royleane: [00:30:44](#) I agreed.

Brittany: [00:30:48](#) So I guess, moving right along the timeline of things, um, I'm curious to know what or when your interest peaked in spiritual direction as far as your faith transition goes? I mean, what, what was it that drew you to spiritual formation, spiritual practices and then to consider becoming a spiritual director?

Royleane: [00:31:09](#) So, as you know, we're all on our own journeys and are on our own timelines of those journeys. And I would say the first when I, when some things, when some narratives and ideas and stories and formations, like things like the temple and things like that we're being broke down for me, I had to kind of sit for awhile and let things continue to break down and just kind of sit there and not necessarily try to replace it or rebuild. I had to sit there and grieve, let it sink in, what didn't really work for me anymore and just kind of almost like sitting on the middle of the road with the broken vase or something, you know, and kind of sifting through, sifting through stuff to see what, uh, what if anything you can salvage. That's how I felt. And that was

probably a year and a half to two years and to my face expansion and I was listening to, I was just feeling, I was church hopping a lot with Steve and he had already, I believe, found a home in Community of Christ.

Royleane: [00:32:19](#) And I just kept hopping and looking at places and looking at different spiritual practices and reading books and different things, but I was still grieving. I like wasn't really ready to start rebuilding. And I don't think I fully understood that at that time. But I remember talking to him and just kind of being, I felt like he was at such a peaceful place and I was frustrated. I just felt so kind of, I guess confused or, or lost or like I had no anchor still. Like there were, it was exciting, all the new things I was learning, but I just didn't know what I wanted to do with things. And so I heard this podcast about spiritual directors and I'd never heard of it before. And a lot of people hate that name because the spiritual director is not, it sounds like somebody who's like, okay, come and talk to me and I will tell you all the things to do, or I will give you this law and you follow this law and you can follow up with me.

Royleane: [00:33:26](#) But what a spiritual director is, a better word as a spiritual companion or a soul friend or eh, yeah, there's lots of different names, but it's basically someone who will sit with you in your spiritual formation, in your journey with God and will listen. And as they're listening, there's you and that person and then their spirit or life, whatever you want to call it with both of you. And then as the director's listening, they then will sometimes ask questions and so there's a lot of healing that goes on in it because when you have someone listening to you and just listening and so there's something about naming and saying things that are going on with you that in itself is healing. And then the person is trained to listen for kind of some key things going on and then they ask questions and that helps you pull it out of yourself.

Royleane: [00:34:26](#) So you're finding the answers within you so they don't direct you, right? Like they just listen and they ask questions and then they have joy with you. When you are kind of finding different places along the path that are working with you and they celebrate that with you. So I first heard this podcast about this and I thought I can choose who I talk to, I can choose a woman maybe if I want to and I can have someone just listen to me with no agenda and they are trained and they can companion me on this journey? And I just got really excited. It just kind of spoke to my soul and I thought that's what I need. Because I had been to a couple of pastors in the area and they'd been super helpful and really kind. But you know, I wasn't a member of

their congregation and they're very busy with so much stuff to do.

Royleane: [00:35:25](#) And so first of all, they were kind enough to take the time to talk to me even though I wasn't a member of their congregation. But it wasn't like someone I could meet with necessarily on a, I didn't feel like on a regular basis. So when I heard this podcast about spiritual, I got really excited and I, they mentioned going to this website called sdiworld.org and you can find a special director there. And it was literally, so I thought in my head, I'm really excited about that. That sounds great. But for some reason I didn't go to the website. I just thought on the idea of a spiritual director. And it was literally a couple of days later, my favorite pastor in town, down at the Methodist Church, Laura, I follow her on Facebook and she posted a blog post about spiritual direction and I w she has a spiritual director and I thought, wow, pastors and clergy people, they need spiritual directors too.

Royleane: [00:36:15](#) I was really, I thought that was actually really beautiful and humbling that they don't have all the answers either. Right? Like they just need someone to companion them. And I saw, I read her blog and she talked about how it had helped her and was continuing to help her in her faith formation. And so after that I then went to the website and just looked up different looking for someone in my area and I was looking specifically for a female name and clicked on a few and found one. She really spoke to me, her website, and she was interfaith. So I knew that I would be safe with her to talk about whatever I need to talk about. And then we met and we met at a Starbucks and, um, she has had a stroke and I absolutely loved and adored talking to her because I have a very hard time slowing down.

Royleane: [00:37:17](#) One of my things in life that does keep me from being present is moving fast all the time. And she, I sat and talked to her and I had to be really present and totally focused to listen and understand what she was saying back to me. And she also just let me rattle on and on, you know, my whole story, but any time she had a question for me, I had to really focus and be present with her and I just knew this is the person I need right now in my life and she will, it will help me slow down. And she's been fabulous. I've been seeing her for a year and a half to two years. I'm trying to think. We're going on two years, I think I've been seeing her for two years now.

Brittany: [00:38:07](#) So I'm curious, when you meet with her, you said that she just asks questions, she doesn't necessarily give advice or anything

like that. What kinds of questions do you get asked to help yourself go deeper?

Royleane: [00:38:24](#) Well, like the other day, the summertime I love because we can go on walks. So we're walking through the forest together and I'm talking to her about things and that the questions will be like, um, have you ever thought about saying yes or I wonder when you say this, what are your thoughts on that? You know, or, um, one time she said to me, she said, so what is your relationship with anger? Right? So they're just, she's listening and she's picking up on common themes coming around. And so the one where she said, have you ever thought of saying yes, that is a question for me. But then also like an invitation to think on that more. And then sometimes when she said things like that, I'll ask her more about that will tell me more about what, what does that mean? Is that a type of spiritual practice? And explain that to me. So then if you invite the spiritual director to do that, then they can expand and they will kind of, and someone might say that could be advice or whatever. They're just basically educating you and letting you sit with it and decide if that's something that you feel might help you.

Brittany: [00:39:48](#) I love that. It sounds like very active listening, which is a spiritual practice, you know, and repeating things that you hear or turning it into a question. I can imagine how validating that would feel as you're going through all of your mess or you're wrestle with God or whatever you may be talking about to then be validated. But then like you said, to have that invitation to look at things a different way or imagine things in a different way. What would it look like if you said yes? Have you thought about saying yes? Yeah, that sounds really productive and healing and healthy.

Royleane: [00:40:26](#) It really has been. I know when I first started seeing her, I think I was crying all the time. I, you know, I was still had a lot of grief and a lot of pain and I still cry, but definitely the last six months she's been like, wow, you're just a lot more peaceful. Um, and I think that comes from not only my spiritual direction training, but also meeting with her as well. Because through both of those things, I have learned to trust my inner voice again, which I was first taught about within Mormonism, right? That we all have a spirit and the holy ghost or the voice inside of us, the light of Christ inside of us. But I feel like with all of the rules and the laws and obedience around me and that sometimes, especially in the college years, my answers or things that were going along with those didn't necessarily match up with what I was told I was supposed to do. And so at some point along the way, I think I definitely got less confident in that voice within

me. And um, and definitely when you go through a faith expansion, you can really lose trust because you think, well, I thought all of this was true and I had spiritual experiences that told me it was. And so then that can really do a number on your self confidence and trust in yourself.

Brittany:

[00:41:55](#)

For sure. I can relate to that a lot, which I think is one reason why having a spiritual director or a spiritual companion would be so helpful to be able to discuss those things and peel apart those spiritual experiences that you had and maybe put them in their context. And not necessarily, I don't know. I can look back on some of my experiences and I can get angry and feel like I was spiritually manipulated, but then maybe be able to either work through those feelings of anger or to reframe it and say, okay, maybe this isn't, wasn't a blatant manipulation, but maybe this is what your leaders were working with at the time, or your family or, you know, whatever. So I can, I can tell that it would be really helpful.

Royleane:

[00:42:39](#)

It was, I think she definitely helped, helps me. Um, and I was kind of already working on this before, but she's definitely helped me work through even more, basically honoring, honoring some type of Divine or life was in my life throughout my life and that that source will talk to me through whatever lens I have on at the time. And so these spiritual experiences I had in Mormonism, you know, a lot of them, I look back on them and think at the time I interpreted that meant that the church was true. But if I look back and think or reading in the journal entries about what was really going on, I was just feeling immense love and you know that I was the loved loved being and then I was putting my lens and my interpretation on top of that. So yeah, so that has kind of helped me. I, Elizabeth Lester wrote this amazing book called the Seeker's Guide and she talks about the importance of having some times structure and practices and faith communities and that as you're going through your faith expansions, if you can just, if you feel it feeling something calling to you, if you can just dive into that wholly, because the whole point of the practices are, the way they have it set up is it kind of works that way the way they have it set up.

Royleane:

[00:44:01](#)

So if you can dive into it with full commitment, but with your eyes wide open is the key. And then you will also know when that is no longer working for you. So that's kind of the mantra that I've taken since my faith expansion that my eyes were open more and I can honor the things that it helps me in the faith development that it helped me with, especially as a teen and a child. And now as I continue in other faith communities in other

practices, I want to do those practices the way because they help you, they work that way that they have them set out, but also having my eyes wide open that I, I do not have to say yes to anything that I don't feel like is going to help me or is not ready with me. Kind of taking off all of the, your salvation depends on things really helps give you a lot of freedom.

Brittany: [00:44:57](#) For sure. That book intrigues me, so I'm going to look it up and we'll be sure to link it in the show notes. Um, and I was going to ask you about other resources, but first before we get to that, I want you to talk about your spiritual direction program a little bit more. So what is the structure of your program like? What kinds of, I guess books maybe we will get into resources. Uh, what kinds of things are you studying? Just give us all the info.

Royleane: [00:45:26](#) Okay. So the program, I absolutely love and adore it. And I've had other people ask me about it and if anybody is feeling that this is really speaking to them and are feeling the call for spiritual direction, one of the key things, the first thing is in order to be a spiritual director you need to be having spiritual direction in your life as well, which is just like those clergy members and stuff I told you about, right? Cause you're being responsible, um, to have that as well. So that was one of the first requirements of the program. It's in Portland. It's run by nuns. And I had no idea the first time I showed up. I honestly expected them to be in like their habits, you know, like their black outfits and everything. They're just regular people and they're cute pants and sweaters and they are the most joyous kind, happy, loving, balanced people I've ever met.

Royleane: [00:46:29](#) The main person who's in charge of the program, her name is Sister Mary Joe and she's been in charge of it for years and she has been doing spiritual direction for 25 years herself. Um, and then she has a partner, Eileen. And then there's other people who help as well. We meet once a month. We study all kinds of different things. We practice spiritual practices. We have a lot of self reflection time and journaling. We have to make our own kind of looking within ourselves, a lot of deep work looking within ourselves and what is our gift? What is our thing that we have that we feel like is what we're supposed to offer basically out to the world to help the world. So we had to write our own kind of way of life, right? And what is it deep within us that we feel we have to offer.

Royleane: [00:47:19](#) And then what are practices and things that we're going to do that will help us live in that space. We learned a lot about Franciscan theology. We learned about, um, the Myers Briggs personality stuff. We learned about any gram and that

awareness. We learned a lot about some other psychology and we, we had bodywork, breathwork, breathwork specialists come in and do meditation and breath work. We had another person come in and speak to us about dream work. And what I loved about all of the things that we learned is all of the people, once again didn't put around it anything in that this is the only way or this has some special powers. It was all just, these are tools and do any of these tools speak to you and help you and feel free to use them if they do. And I specifically have all the things that we've done, Enneagram has really spoken to me. It's helped me definitely a lot more with my awareness and the motivation of why I do what I do. And just helped me be more aware in my reactivity.

Brittany: [00:48:42](#)

It sounds like it's, it would be hard work to have to reflect inwardly so much and kind of dig at the spiritual part of you, it sounds exciting, but then when I think about actually doing it, like it kind of gives me hives a little bit.

Royleane: [00:49:01](#)

It is you're in a cohort of 16 people. Oh, and the other thing that we do, we also do this every month as well, is you practice spiritual direction. So this first time, oh gosh, okay, sorry. The first time we practice spiritual direction. So I was just two months into the program and I was seeing my spiritual director, but regardless, I was still crying a lot at this point. And we would go down there and there's something about when you're with 16 people and you know you're all there together and that they kind of set the space as the sacred space and we're going to talk about these things. You know, you get really deep with each other very quick in these spaces, which is healing and helpful and it's also painful. You feel a lot of emotions. And so the first time we had to practice spiritual direction with each other, they told me, you're going to be in this room and here's your partner.

Royleane: [00:49:58](#)

And there's only three men in the program. The rest of us are women. And I just happened to be paired with a man and he was like 20 years older than me. Okay, I'm coming out of Mormonism. I had not been like in a room to talk about spiritual things with a man since my last encounter with my bishop. So just walking up the stairs, tears start streaming down my face to go to this room where I talk and we sit down and says, you know, do you want to go first? And I just start bawling. I'm just crying and I'm basically like vomiting all my emotions all over him. And I'm telling him, look, I have a lot of pain and anger around men right now. I'm having this feminist awakening and this patriarchy. And this was my experience. I sit across the bishop who was like this authority over me, and it's the first time in a room with the man.

Royleane: [00:50:56](#) And he just listened. He just listened and he validated and apologized on behalf of men and, um, just really, really had space for me. And he also cried too. He cried at my pain and that was like, to me, that was one of like the turning points start to really start to heal that very, very deep wound with me. And I tell him all the time, he's just so special to me now. I love and adore him and he's, I remind him of his daughter. So he's also doing healing and like what he listens to me, his daughter talks to him, but something about coming out of my mouth as well as helping heal him and helping him try and understand, understand his daughter better. So yeah, that was, so we do that too. We do spiritual direction with one another and we all usually end up crying in that with one another.

Brittany: [00:51:58](#) Oh, that sounds so beautiful and vulnerable and terrifying and amazing and all the things.

Royleane: [00:52:08](#) Yeah. And we're really close now, we all really love each other and this next year, so that's the first year is really learning a lot of academic stuff. We had papers to write, we had art projects to do, we had sole collages to make and we did practice spiritual direction as well. And now the second year is basically it's going to be very different. It's basically I have two people that I will be directing all year, um, and I will basically be getting supervision and understanding how I can be a better active listener and, and work on my skills with that.

Brittany: [00:52:43](#) Wow. Are you excited?

Royleane: [00:52:45](#) I am. I'm really excited because I, I, I'm really trying to work on living in the here and now and my natural tendency is I'm signing up for this program and paying money for it.

Royleane: [00:52:57](#) And so what is it going to look like at the end? And I want to know what it's gonna look like right now at the end. And I, it took me at least half a year of this last year of that program to finally let that go. And at the end of this program, I still have no idea what it's gonna look like, but I'm just trying to live out of my, uh, way of life, which for me, the root is overflowing love. And so I'm trying to live out of that and, and just doing things like signing up to help with the retreat, right? As I'm invited to and I will learn about the direction and I will start my own for sure, I want to start my own spiritual direction, practice. And then I love retreats. I love those women retreat. So I'll just see how it unfolds and that's exciting.

Brittany: [00:53:42](#) That is exciting. I'm excited for you and I think they are going to be great. Um, I know we know each other primarily from the

Internet, but being with you at that retreat, uh, I could tell right away that this was, this was kind of your thing. This was your lane. This was you. You were, you're good here.

Royleane: [00:53:59](#) Um, thank you. I'm excited.

Brittany: [00:54:03](#) So I guess I do want to ask you about maybe some book titles or just resources in general. They don't necessarily have to be books, although I know from that retreat that you have quite a good book collection and women at that retreat were physically taking pictures of the covers so they could go back, look them up.

Royleane: [00:54:25](#) Yeah. I love books. I love, love, love books. I have so many and not enough time to read them all in. Um, if you're, what it depends on what, what you want and what you want to focus in practice on. But what am I go to books for? Spiritual practices that I love lately is called an Altar in the World by Barbara Brown Taylor. And what I love about it is she blows up the idea that it has to be, um, you have to walk into a church to do a spiritual practice or you have to be some member of some religion for a spiritual practice. She blows that up and that's why she calls it an altar in the world because it's basically sitting down at a table with people and communing and talking to them and sharing food. That's a spiritual practice. That's a holy place.

Royleane: [00:55:13](#) And, uh, being outside on the water right or walking in nature or, uh, there's so many different types of practices and pretty much I've come down to if something is speaking to you and touching you and helping you feel connected with the world and with others, that's a spiritual practice for you. And you know what that is. And from my lens that I have on right now, every place is a holy space. Every place is holy and beautiful. This whole world is beautiful and holy. So that, that book really affirms that. I love that book. The other book I was talking about was the Seeker's Guide by Elizabeth Lesser. Uh, it's really good. She kind of tells her story on it. And then she also has a bunch of meditations in there and uh, she talks a lot about also, you know, trying other practices, Buddhist meditation, things like that.

Royleane: [00:56:13](#) There's so many, there's so many things to explore. Um, there's so many things to explore. And then again, just waking up every morning is holy practice, right? So you can explore all you want or you can just find spiritual practice just in your daily life. Uh, so it's really up to you and what is really speaking to you. We're all wired and built differently. So I'm trying to think if you're

Christian or if, if the story of Jesus still speaks to you after your faith expansion stuff, a book recently I read that I absolutely loved as well as called the Universal Christ by Richard Rohr. That was really fabulous as well, talking about spiritual practices but also kind of seeing the whole Jesus and the Christ story in a bigger, more expansive lens and not just narrowing it down to just certain people are saved type of idea. And yeah, I have a whole bunch of books as you know, and I'm happy to send you that list and you can put them on, on, um, on your website. But there are lots of, there's so many resources out there.

Royleane: [00:57:28](#) I think my favorite part about exploring in books and different spiritual practices is knowing that if something doesn't work for you, it's okay to put it down. Because like you said, your spiritual, your eternal salvation does not depend on any one practice.

Royleane: [00:57:42](#) Exactly. Well, and the other thing is, sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off. I'm also, you, um, you may pick something up and it might work for you for a really long time and then that thing might stop working and there's nothing wrong or no shame in that as well. Or No. Like, what's wrong with me? Do I, doesn't this work anymore? It just doesn't work. And that's okay.

Brittany: [00:58:04](#) Yeah. And if you try something once or, um, and if it doesn't work, then you can put it down and then revisit it later. That's kind of what happened with me and labyrinth walking. At first it was way too funky. I could not get my head in it. It was, and I, I think I felt a lot of shame for not enjoying it because so many people around me, I mean, that was like the big thing. It still is a big thing, but a lot of people in my congregation really enjoyed the labyrinth. And so I kind of felt like I was in this similar feelings space of like everyone else is connecting with God this way, but I'm not, so what's wrong with me? And it wasn't until I talked to other others who didn't really enjoy the library either. Then I was like, oh, I can actually not enjoy it and that's fine. And then I revisited it several years later and I wouldn't say it's my favorite spiritual practice, but I can do it without feeling shame and without feeling like I'm breaking out in a rash. So that's a win.

Royleane: [00:59:09](#) I love that so much. I bet. I'm a, my degree is in special education and we basically learned in that, that every person learns differently. And in ideal world, for me, it's special educator everybody would have their own path with education learning their own IEP. Right? And you think of it in that way, like everybody had to have their own IEP and there's some kids that the same types of things will work for them. And then

there's some kids that are just totally different. And that's the same way with spiritual practices. Right? Like we all come with our own map and our own lenses and everything on. And you'll find some people who like the same practices as you do and some people who don't. And there's no shame in not liking any of the practices. I know there's a lot of women I've talked to who just really always hated their experience in the temple.

Royleane: [01:00:00](#)

They did not like the temple. It didn't mean anything to them. And they felt so much shame around all of that, that they didn't love it, that it wasn't special to them. You know, and they're active in the LDS church. And I would just say whatever you are in, whatever faith community or whatever, or if there's certain practices that aren't speaking to you, there's no shame in that. It doesn't, if it doesn't work for you that that's just not, that's not the lens that you're seeing things through. And, and that's OK. And the other thing you can do besides reading is you can come to our awesome womens retreats we do. There are lots of retreats besides like the one that we did last week. There's, you can go on websites and look, there's all kinds of places. Oh there's this Celtic, there's this Irish, this woman who lives in Ireland.

Royleane: [01:00:49](#)

I really want to go to these retreats cause they're in Ireland. And she wrote this book, Christine Vaulter's painter, and she's from the Seattle area originally. And she wrote this book called the Soul Slow Ripening. And she talks about Celtic Christian practices, which are very, they kind of mix the pagan and the Christian. They, they had a, a beautiful way of not losing kind of what they had is their practices in the area and they were able to in Mesh it within Christianity, which means it's very earth-based. So, uh, like they have this practice, I think it's a pair of grenades show. I'm not sure if that same attic back in like in the book, but there's some practices, there's this practice spiritual practice of thresholds, right? So seeing thresholds in your life and stopping and honoring the thresholds. And there's this practices, you know, we'd like the monks would get in a boat and they wouldn't steer it to go anywhere.

Royleane: [01:01:43](#)

They just wait for the wind to push them, right? So when do you ever hear about just getting in a boat and just letting it take your ever, it's going to go and push and instead of like rowing, like I'm going to get there, you just let the wind push you. And I thought that was an interesting thought, was having God push you from behind instead of being in front of you and leading you, which is always, you know, it's just a different way of looking at things. So that woman who wrote that book, she lives in Ireland and she has retreats over there as well. So there are

retreats all over the world if you want to go have some fun and learn about different practices. Um, that's another good way and it's as a good space to get with other people who are working on that as well and being vulnerable with one another.

Brittany: [01:02:30](#) Yeah. And I know that we have had, um, a couple, at least a couple of episodes about Community of Christ spiritual companioning program as well. So there really are a ton of different options for official programs or for retreats or you know, whatever floats your boat. Yup. The wind will push your boat forward.

Royleane: [01:02:53](#) Yes. I do really like that analogy though. That's a good one. Yeah. It's, it's a very different way. It's a very different way of, of looking at it. To me, it's definitely more of a spiritual practice of trust that I don't have to see you in front of me and follow every step you're telling me to do that I'm going to get in this boat, I'm going to say yes and get in this boat and I'm going to trust that we're going to do something and I have no idea what it looks like. I have no idea where we're going. I'm going to trust. And that's, that's what I love about that. That's visual, spiritual practice for me.

Brittany: [01:03:34](#) For sure. Well, Roy, anything else? I've really enjoyed this time together. We've laughed a little and that's always good too. It's one of my favorite spiritual practices.

Royleane: [01:03:49](#) Yes, me too. I usually like to read a poem or something. Always at the end of my podcast just because I love poetry. But um, but I, OK, I've got one. I was just thinking all of my books are still in the bin from the retreat downstairs. I'm going to impact them. But, um, here's my, here's a little poem. I love poetry. I would say poetry and reading palms is spiritual practice for me. So here's my prayer for everybody listening to this. It's from a Celtic poem book and it's called prayer for the life of the world for the freshness of this new day. Thanks be to you. Oh God. For morning's gift of clarity. It's light like the first days don, thanks be to you. In this newborn light let us see a fresh in this gateway onto what has never been before. Let our soul breathe hope. For the earth, for the creatures, for the human family. Let our soul breathe hope. And I love that because it just makes me think of a each day and all of us with our faith changes, they change each day. That every day is a new day for hope and newborn light and see, see new things and possibilities out there. [inaudible].

Brittany: [01:05:12](#) beautiful. Roy, thank you so much. Sure. Thanks so much for having me today. I've really enjoyed conversation Britney. I have

to and I think it was helpful and productive and will hopefully open some doors for some listeners, so thank you.

- Royleane: [01:05:24](#) Thanks. So yeah, listeners feel free if they have any questions they can message me on Facebook. I don't because I have one more year of training. I don't have an actual like card with a email and my spiritual direction practice set up, but um, be sure and link on this page as well. The SDIworld.org is a really great resource for anyone looking for a spiritual director.
- Brittany: [01:05:49](#) For sure we will. Thank you so much Roy!
- Royleane: [01:05:52](#) Thank you Brittany. Have a great day.
- Music: [01:06:01](#) [inaudible]
- Josh Mangelson: [01:06:02](#) thanks for listening to Project Zion podcast. Subscribe to our podcast on apple podcast, stitcher or whatever podcast streaming service you use and while you are there, give us a five star rating projects. I am podcast is sponsored by Latter-day Seekers Ministries of Community of Christ. The views and opinions expressed in this episode are of those speaking and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of latter day secret ministries or community of Christ. The music has been graciously provided by Dave Hinze,
- Music: [01:06:43](#) [inaudible] [inaudible], [inaudible] [inaudible].