

Speaker 1: [00:00:15](#) [inaudible].

PZP Bumper: [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

Speaker 1: [00:00:32](#) [inaudible].

Robin: [00:00:34](#) Hello and welcome to Project Zion Podcast. This is your host Robin Linkhart and today is another episode under our Holy Grounds series where we discuss spirituality, spiritual practices, and what that looks like in our every day lives. Today our guest is Andy Fernuik. Andy Joined Community of Christ in 2010 he is a man of many talents, linguist, actor, artist, musician, ski instructors, scuba diver, fencer, creator of divine culinary delights, and I would add a spiritual practitioner extraordinaire. Welcome Andy. Thanks for being with us today.

Andy: [00:01:25](#) Oh, thank you, Robin. Thank you. It is a joy to be with you. It's a joy—sheer joy.

Robin: [00:01:30](#) Today we are taking a slightly different approach to the topic of spirituality. This episode is going to be all about spiritual awakening. Being awake and attentive is a spiritual practice and discipline of attentiveness that actually takes on a life of its own. So Andy, I want to start with that term awakening or spiritual awakening. What does that mean from your perspective? What does that mean? What does that have to do with God, with our relationship with God? I think you get what I'm trying to ask.

Andy: [00:02:14](#) Yes, I do. As a matter of fact, but as far as having a very clear answer to it, spiritual awakening I suppose, just as a disclaimer, my answers are not absolutes here. Obviously this is an interview where you're asking my opinions and my own life experience and such. So I cannot say how it is for everyone else or what it is for everyone else or even for you, Robin. But for me, I suppose awakening, a spiritual awakening, as much like the word awakening, we do it every day. If we've got a night's sleep, we wake up and there are many phases to it. You know, one thing I love about this podcast is how it's likened and organized different types of coffee or beverage. The way that we've got caffeinated this or fair trade topics that, you know, there are many phases to waking up.

Andy: [00:03:12](#) We have that little lucid kind of dreaming phase where you suddenly realize, "Oh, I've been asleep" and there's a shift in

consciousness or awareness that I think is paramount. Same thing in spiritual awakening, there is a shift of awareness and of consciousness and changing. Then we have that phase where we start to, maybe lie there in bed for an hour kind of dancing between sleep and lucid dreaming and being awake. And we can hear people starting their cars to go to work outside, but we're like, "Oh, thank goodness that's not me." Anyway, and then finally we get out of bed. We're still not totally with it. We might feel the call to go into the loo or make a cup of tea or coffee or something. Then there's much later on in the day. Hopefully we're fully awake, fully functioning,

Andy:

[00:04:03](#)

A spiritual awakening to me is a great many things, but ultimately it's a shift in awareness and consciousness. That range is pretty vast. A wide swath of experience in that. There's everything from I suppose, divine encounter and transformation, you know moments like in Jesus' life when he was transfigured on the mount. That's a little more than just transformation. Transfiguration, you know, where great things are happening in the spirit and in both the physical and spiritual world together. There is the moment to moment in our lives where we might just feel an impression to do something or to call a friend Where did that impression come from? How did we know that we needed to call that friend or family member right away? That can seem pretty small and insignificant, but still, it can be a communication from God's spirit.

Andy:

[00:05:17](#)

There's moments like the early saints had after Christ was taken back up into heaven at Pentecost. The spirit of God, like a fire sweeping through a great community of worshipers. Also in the early history of the Restoration, there were lots of similar experience where the spirit of God, like a fire burning in the souls and in the hearts of the participants swept through great groups of people. And it was obviously something that they were not producing themselves, but they could all experience contiguously at the same moment there. Ultimately I find that God's spirit, God's Holy Spirit moving in our lives, is what causes spiritual awakening. And that is to me, the essence of the spiritual awakening. God's presence, divine encounters as through God's spirit and through the mysteries and the wonders of God unfolding in our minds and in our lives. What is it for you?

Robin:

[00:06:39](#)

That's a great question. For me, it's choosing to be attentive, which sounds really easy to do, but I find it to be a great challenge, especially in the context of lives that get busy and things that demand our attention elsewhere. And I've also realized that there's an art to having attentiveness awakened

and being able to layer that on top of other things that are happening. But I find it elusive, much more often than I want to admit.

Andy: [00:07:23](#) Hmm. Thank you. So that's, you know, that's a very brave confession. I must have the same confession I do. It's something that is a bit elusive or definitely seems so to me, at times. I agree with you about that attentiveness. I want to say in my own life the way I described that is maybe a good starting point for spiritual awakening and attentiveness or even deeper. Just a simple desire, a desire or a longing for spiritual awakening is already part of the spiritual awakening process. Does that make sense? Spiritual awakening as I see is wanting God in my life more than he already is. Wanting the spirit to move and work in my life more than I'm already aware of it or more than it is already working in my life. More than I'm already allowing it. So that attentiveness to me—I agree with that. There is an attentiveness, number one, to realizing that I want something more than what I have in my life. I'm attentive and honest with myself, that it's a little bit more elusive to me than I want it to be.

Andy: [00:08:57](#) I want to be able to develop that more in my life. I want more of God's spirit in my life working in me, through me, for my life, for the lives of others. That to me is the crucial point, the crux, if we will, the place where it all happens. Because I remember so many years of my life judging myself for being dissatisfied with what was available to me or with the elusiveness of my interactions with the spirit. And, I would judge myself for being dissatisfied saying, "Oh, you know, this is an indication to me of my own fallenness, of how far and separated I am from God." But Oh, contrare, as the spirit has helped me see and transform my own perspective on that, I see a much different picture emerge. That desire itself, and that longing for spiritual awakening, is the beginning.

Andy: [00:10:11](#) It is the ground ready for spiritual awakening to take place. It is evidenced to me that Christ's spirit is already working within me. For example, from scripture. There's all kinds of (examples)...Nephi in the book of Mormon, not the first Nephi, but the third Nephi who's named after the first Nephi. This is much later. This is right before Christ comes at post resurrection to reveal himself to the American inhabitants. And I remember learning from his example as I was reading it and—recalling it, I think more than reading it—I think it was knowing this story already from childhood and the spirit, bringing it to my attention at one point and saying, let's go revisit that. And as I did, the spirit opened up to me. Maybe it's part of my skills as

well as being an actor, but that's one way the spirit works in my life is to bring in seemingly banal skills, seemingly worldly skills such as learning how to dissect the script and the character and create that character through subtle details, even missing details. So I was reading about this third Nephi and he's going about in all the land trying to set the affairs of the church in order. Some are teaching one thing, some are teaching this, some are teaching core principles that are true, but they're adding more to it. Some are totally off the mark. He gets home and he's discouraged. And so he's on his garden tower praying to God and pouring out his soul. He's in a down spot.

Andy: [00:11:55](#) And what happens is there's some passer-bys who pass by, who look at him and say, "Dude, what's the problem? What's going on here? Why are you so miserable?" And he responds and says, because of the sins of the people in all the land, they're separated from God. How far away people are from having God in their lives. And they're like, "What are you talking about? Life's great. Life is good man. Things are going great. We're thriving, everything's fine. What's your problem?" Now and then of course he responds. He says, "Okay, here's the sign. Your chief judge has been murdered and he's lying in a pool of his own blood and here's how you find out who did it." Now, post-experience, he's going away from that meeting. They go to check it out and see if he's telling the truth. And he's walking away, marveling at the things that God has just shown him in that moment, you know?

Andy: [00:12:51](#) So giving the indication, he didn't even know what was revealed to him in that same moment that he was telling them. So I see a lot of how God's working here in this. This is the same Nephi that when Christ does come, he calls Nephi's name out of the crowd of people and has Nephi come up in front of everyone and he says, this is Nephi who will lead and organize my church here, I'm putting him in charge and he will speak my will. So it's interesting to see that before Christ comes, that this Nephi from the outside from a spectator's perspective was the most miserable and disturbed of present conditions, you know, of concurrent conditions for him. So he was dissatisfied. Joseph Smith, Jr., the first prophet of all the Restoration movement, was quite dissatisfied as a 14 year old boy.

Andy: [00:13:50](#) He could not find any answers that satisfied his life. And there were a lot of answers available to him through different preachers and family members and other sources. But he was dissatisfied. That was his point of seeking out God. And boy, did he get an answer according to this story, right? Now in my life, very similar. I mentioned a little the other day on the Fair Trade

podcast session I did, that I too was very dissatisfied with all the medical answers. All the spiritual leaders answers every answer I could find worldwide. And throughout history I was quite dissatisfied with what they told me about my creation and who I am and why I'm so different than other people. So it was the impetus that started my longing and searching. It was what gave birth to connecting with God and going on that quest and journey.

Andy: [00:14:55](#) And ever since it's just been like that, it's been like a zipper pole. It's just been the most divine mystery and marvel to me of leading me on to deeper mysteries and wonders that truly I've not find anybody else that can give me these answers about myself, my creation, and changed my perspective and transform my own life in these ways. So desire and learning. I've always gotta be careful as to not judge myself that those deep dissatisfactions with where I am and what I am are not indications to me of my own standing before God. That I'm worthless. That I'm so far separated from God that there is no hope for me. Instead of frustrating me, I try and let them be an indication to me of, and give me the excitement of what is to come if I seek it out—that relationship from God.

Andy: [00:15:56](#) But I also have to be very honest with myself about what do I want. And this is something I'm learning as well. I've noticed in my own life that a lot of times, you know, when, when I bump into people who complain, whether in any kind of relationship or interaction. If they're complainers about things, I say, okay—this is something I learned through years of therapy and counseling. I often ask those people, "Then what do you want? Okay, this is what don't you want, this is what's not working for you. What would work for you? What, what do you want?" And so many times it's shocking. They don't know. They don't know what they want. They just know what they don't want. The same with me. Oftentimes I have to catch myself and say, "Okay, I know what I don't want.

Andy: [00:16:47](#) I know what's not working for me. Do I know what would work for me? Do I know what I do want? I'm desiring something. I'm longing for more of God's spirit in my life. What does that look like? How, how was that to come? What? What is it exactly that I want more of God's spirit in my life?" And I, I noticed that Jesus in the scriptures does a lot to ask people in his encounters in the New Testament, he often asks them, what do they want? Do they want healing? Do they want a vindication? Do they want a status in the world? Do you know? Some of the disciples wanted to sit at the right hand of God and he said, he even said, "You do not understand what it is you're asking." He often leads

them, he often leads me as well in those instances, to a deeper understanding first of what it is I want and what it is that I'm seeking. But he's so open to that. I noticed that a lot of religions try and squash that out of us, or eliminate from us, the desire of wanting things—we shouldn't want certain things. We shouldn't want that if we want it. There's no harm in being honest first with ourselves about what we want and then why do we want it. That is a very crucial point where God shows up in his great spirit to teach me and to be honest with myself in those ways. Are we getting off topic? You kinda know this interview better than I. Yes?

Robin:

[00:18:28](#)

I appreciate the path you're taking and digging deeper into the question and to the things that are underneath awakening to God's presence in our lives. I especially appreciate this desire and longing and the question, "What is it that you want?" And as you're speaking, I'm just thinking of times in my own life that I've been called to answer that question, sometimes sitting across from a counselor. And other times recognizing that God is asking that question as well. When I pause and ask that question of myself and answer it honestly, which you're encouraging and which I think is so important to the journey of our relationship with God. When I answer it honestly, it takes me deeper into the underneath layers of that first response to what I want, and sometimes it's a process within myself in the context of my relationship with God, of picking up those rocks of what I want and looking underneath and realizing, "O.", there's something under that that I need to pay attention to.' Which is really getting at the root of my longing. My heart felt soul longing.

Andy:

[00:19:51](#)

Beautiful articulation. Yes. That's not always comfortable, is it? You know something, this is how I've come to look at the practice of confession. Again, like I said in the Fair Trade podcast. One of the ways that the spirit transforms my life through spiritual awakening is by restoring practices and scriptures and aspects of the Gospel and doctrine. God's Gospel, but that have been used to injure my spirit in the past. I don't see it as important the way that I did when I was growing up—that I have to go to some religious leader and tell them everything I've done wrong and have them encourage me to seek God's forgiveness and confess all my sins to somebody that I really don't trust that much, you know? Even in a religious setting. To me, that is not confession as much as what you are describing to me here of confessing to oneself first and foremost, being as honest and as deeply, painfully honest as possible with oneself first. And who better to do that?

Andy: [00:21:10](#) I find then the most loving, the most generous and graceful and forgiving God, the most incredible being of love that will share that space with me and not only share that space with me, but once I get to that place of depth of confession to myself, no matter how uncomfortable, that's most often when I find that God shows up to soften that and change my perspective and turn such a painful, icky, uncomfortable place of being into one of grace and soothing and healing and encouragement and beauty and it isn't me that creates that moment, that's God working and transforming me in my life on a very essential base level of my being. I love how you articulated that. Yeah. Picking up a rock and looking and going Ehh! Set that back down quick. Woo!

Robin: [00:22:17](#) Well, and I love what you're describing because as much as we place condemnation and judgment on ourselves or we allow others to put that on us, when we're open and honest with God, even about our darkest places, there is never, never condemnation in the presence of God. It is always this loving acceptance and an embrace. As you say, there's this embrace, "Come to me. Let me hold you, let me be with you." And it seems in my own life, I have to learn that more than once. And realize it's always safe. It is always safe and grace-filled to come to God and share the worst of the worst.

Andy: [00:23:09](#) It's only me that does the condemning of myself. And that is such a hard place to be in, but so beautiful when he leads me out of it through his spirit. He does not condemn. He does not condemn. I heard often, not just in my own faith growing up, but in many faiths growing up, around me. I heard we love the sinner, but we condemn the sin and that's just not, that's just not my experience with God. There is no condemnation whatsoever in the presence of God or person, for action, for anything I've done. There is never condemnation, truly.

Robin: [00:23:54](#) Only healing, only healing and making things whole again.

Andy: [00:24:00](#) Truly that's it. That wholeness that comes. But I must first face that brokenness, that confession of myself and being honest with myself, that's a tough place. I noticed another longing, one that was beautifully put in the scripture of Christ saying in Matthew. He said, "Come unto me all ye that Labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me. For I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." This is something I find that most people want. This is a desire and a longing most people have. I looked around us and life—truly this world gets more hectic all the time and the

interconnectedness that we have of telecommunications only exacerbate that. It makes it so much worse because no longer do we have the safe space of being able to write a letter, and take time for the post, deliver it, and then have a response come. No, we have instant texts and sometimes we get too many in a day to respond to. Sometimes the emails are too many. People expect this all the time.

- Andy: [00:25:17](#) I noticed in the industry that, "Oh well, well, why can't you show up at this? Or why can't you do everything I'm doing?" Well, you choose to live and work 23 hours a day. That's your business. I don't live and work that way, so don't expect me to. And they're just all these conflicts that come because of it and our lives become fuller and fuller and fuller and we need a deep rest for our souls. An easy way of life seems so distant from us. But I have, I can tell you, I have at times really tapped into that and touched on that. It's still something I'm trying to develop. That's part of that elusiveness. I've tasted it for periods of my life and I seek for it and I'm driven for that. The same scripture I just read from the King James version, I will read from another publishing of the Bible called The Message. I love the wording in that one. It's more of a modern word in a contemporary speech. "And God will teach us, we will learn from him, from Jesus, the unforced rhythms of grace." I love those words. "The unforced rhythms of grace."
- Robin: [00:26:33](#) Yes.
- Andy: [00:26:34](#) Oh, just saying that alone gives me a little bit of peace and certainly stokes that desire and longing in me. I'm like, "Oh, that's what I want. I want to live moment to moment, day by day in the unforced rhythms of grace."
- Robin: [00:26:53](#) That is delightful. That is going to go on a sign that I put in my office for sure.
- Andy: [00:27:00](#) That's Matthew 11:28 through 30. The one I just read from a King James version, but "the unforced rhythms of grace" is from The Message Bible —I guess is called The Message. I'm quite unfamiliar with it, but I've come across it a bit. I was so touched by those words, "unforced rhythms of grace." That awakens in me a desire for even deeper spiritual awakening. Because I know I have not learned to just flow every moment of my life in unforced rhythms of grace.
- Andy: [00:27:34](#) I want this. So why does it touch me? Because I love the word "unforced." I love the word "rhythms." And I love the word "grace." But unforced tells me so much. It reminds me of



something in the last couple of years that I've happened upon, part of my own spiritual awakening. It can be elusive because it happens for us sometimes and then we struggle to make it happen more regularly. Whatever it is that we're seeking. This is one of those elements for me. I was so programmed and trained in the formulaic response of spiritual practice and worship in my life that did not always produce. For example, on my mission in Italy, we had a general authority come and tell us. One of our big time leaders came and promised us that we would have more baptisms if we would do these five things every day.

Andy:

[00:28:33](#)

And he gave us a list of five things to do every day. Or oftentimes I would hear growing up that you know, if I was in a frustrated point or a depressed spot in my life or things weren't quite working out, I'd often hear the response, "Are you reading your scriptures? Are you praying every day? Are you going to church? Are you doing, you know, this and that?" What they were listing to me are spiritual practices and disciplines, but I found for the wrong reasons. It was a forced reason. It was formulaic. It was trying to give like an Algebra problem, trying to plug in the information and get a consistent, unflinching response in the way that I wanted it and it just doesn't work that way for me. In the last few years, this has become something that I had to learn over.

Andy:

[00:29:24](#)

That's what you said. "Something that I have to learn over and over again." Same for me. These are the elements along the way of spiritual awakening that are like growing up in our bodies. Physically. You are not the same dimensions in the height that you entered this world. When did you go from being a tiny child to being someone who can fit into your size two dresses or whatever —you know, is, and wearing adult shoes? Well, there's not a specific moment where suddenly you just, whew, it all happened and suddenly you grew up and have an adult body. It's something that happens in almost undetectable ways at times. Moment by moment, throughout the course of time. Same thing in a lot of these practices. This is where I really find spiritual awakening in the staple of life.

Andy:

[00:30:22](#)

The daily bread is that there are these moments that I have to continue to practice, such as. I remember having the big moment where I was sitting in a communion meeting, a sacrament meeting at one point. And, I noticed that I was trying to reproduce (an experience). I'd had some beautiful moments taking communion within Community of Christ and even within other organizations. I remember one time with the, United Methodists, and as I was investigating different faiths. I

remember other times. I remember even with my parents, who still follow the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and sharing communion with them and feeling a depth of spirit. But some of these moments were almost bottomless emotions, and dimensions far beyond me, of even witnessing Christ suffering on the cross. And the pains he went through, the crucifixion, the shedding of his blood and the breaking of his body.

Andy: [00:31:32](#) And they were very filling and harrowing moments. Then there've been other moments where there's been an overwhelming sense of joy that brings me to tears. Joy, not just mirthful happiness and lightheartedness. No, there's still deep emotion with it. But the overtones, the prevailing overtones are of joy and gratitude, gratitude far beyond me. And so I noticed in this moment, this one day that I was taking communion with the group and it came to me and I suddenly realized, I had that moment of awareness where the spirit showed me what I was doing. I was trying to force an experience like that because I had come to expect it or relish it, love it. And I thought, I'm not gonna miss communion again on the first Sunday of the month. So here I was showing up once again and I took it too far.

Andy: [00:32:31](#) I was overzealous about it as I tried to force a rhythm of grace by saying, "Okay, well I'm going to create within me some of these deep harrowing places or the dimensions of joy and gratitude that are far beyond me. I'm going to make this happen. Here I am." And I think I could see myself trying so hard inside of me fighting and going, oh you know, almost trying to make this happen again. And it made me laugh a little bit, but that was something I was so grateful for, even those little minute ways that the spirit shows up and can moment to moment show me, "Andy, you're trying to force it." This is a relationship that I have with God and the spirit. Would I force you, Robin, you're my friend? Would I force you? I might make a request of you say, "Robin, you know, would you call me tomorrow? At this time I would really appreciate it." And if you're 15 minutes late calling me and I start the conversation with something like, "Robin I told you, you didn't call me when I asked you!" That's not a great start to a conversation, you know. How would you react? I can imagine how you'd react, but how would you react? Would that draw from you the most friendly, loving, comfortable response?

Robin: [00:33:57](#) Well, vinegar never works as well as honey.

Andy: [00:33:59](#) Ah! Bingo, right? Yeah, you would probably—knowing you, as my friend—you would still probably call me and brave out the discussion. I would hope chastise me and say, "Excuse me, but I

have a life of my own and my daughter, you know, blew a flat tire and I had to go pick her up. That's why I'm 15 minutes late calling you so pipe down." Or whatever.

- Andy: [00:34:20](#) You wouldn't respond that way, but gosh, you'd have every right to. That's a relationship. And it took me many years to realize that here I was trying to force these rhythms of grace in my life instead of allowing that, creating the space for them to happen and then allowing them to flow freely. I cannot dictate how the spirit or God is going to show up in my life. I like the words that are coming to me from Adele, Ahlberg Calhoun. You introduced me to her writing. Am I saying her name right? Yes. Good. All right. She writes, "Jesus doesn't grant requests like a genie in a bottle. He works with people allowing their desires to draw him into core conversations of life for Jesus. Requests for water, healing, rest, vindication, approval, status, and so on. All engaged soul hungers, misguided, self-destructive, true or addictive, desperations and desires. Even those open doors to relationships." This goes back to judging ourselves. Even if I'm misguided and self-destructive and addictive in my desperations and desires, those can still open doors to relationship with Jesus. But what I notice is that it's not something I can force like any kind of relationship. I have to create the space and then be open to it and that space can be very uncomfortable. She continues to say that, "Keeping company with Jesus in the space between wanting to change and not being able to change through effort alone, can be a difficult thing to do. Desiring God and not demanding an outcome." I laughed! That is so me sometimes. "Desiring God and not demanding an outcome, keep us in the risky place of waiting and longing."
- Robin: [00:36:37](#) That's beautiful.
- Andy: [00:36:38](#) That's also—sorry, go ahead.
- Robin: [00:36:40](#) I just said that's beautiful and so, so true.
- Andy: [00:36:44](#) It's uncomfortable sometimes like we were saying. That goes back to what we were talking about before. Lifting up the rock and seeing what's under it. She says, "Becoming aware of what is true and false about us is essential for spiritual growth and is not always comfortable, but learning to be okay in that space and waiting and longing and patiently waiting on the Lord to show up however God wants to." I can tell ya that has brought about an incredible step in my own spiritual awakening of not prescribing the way that God is going to show up and plan. I love surprises and I love the kind that just knock me flat on the floor sometimes, and I'm left reeling and going, "Whoa, I had no

idea. That's incredible! That's amazing!" Most often it comes through that kind of enlightening, and enlightenment and change in my own perspective. God reveals great mysteries to me and wonders. But it's up to me to create this space. Now creating that space is what I would define as spiritual practice or disciplines. I heard you breathe in there. If you're going to say something, don't let me interrupt my dear.

- Robin: [00:38:13](#) No, what you said just really spoke to me, so I had to take a breath in to take it in deeply.
- Andy: [00:38:22](#) Hmm. Creating the spaces, my responsibility. If I want more spiritual awakening, if I want the Holy Spirit more in my life, spiritual practice and discipline is my way of creating space. Now, if someone were to tell me that even right now, say, "Andy, you need more spiritual practice and discipline."
- Andy: [00:38:43](#) First, if I'm honest with myself right now. And I would say, "Oh, I don't know when. I don't have time. I don't—how?" Or the ways that I heard growing up. "Are you reading your scriptures? Are you saying your prayers?" And I'm just like, especially in a life like mine, I've heard scriptures used by many, many people and religious leaders to do great damage to my soul and my spirit. Then to have someone say, "Are you reading your scriptures?" So I want to say, "I'm not going to, either! Get out of my face." You know, that's my reaction often times. But what's exciting is the transformation that's taking place in my own life as I continue seeking out how to create better spiritual practice and discipline in my life, how to create this space more consistently and fine tune it so that my spiritual awakening experiences are not so elusive.
- Andy: [00:39:45](#) And there are a number of ways to do that. Something I'm learning quite a bit about spiritual discipline before in spiritual practice is: it must fit my needs and my limits at any given time. Those are going to be different for everybody. So my needs and my limits are different than other people's. If, for example, I'm not finding satisfaction, like I said in the Fair Trade series. There was a time in my life where I could not find it. I was suffering, forcing myself to go to church. That can be a spiritual practice and a discipline: attending the community worship of any kind. But if it's done for the wrong reasons or if it's not working out, it's doing greater damage to my soul. So what might be right and life giving and recharging and rejuvenating for one person, might not be for another.
- Andy: [00:40:46](#) I have to be honest here we go back to the, what do I need? Why do I need it? Is it really something I need, you know, and

do I understand what I'm asking? I've got to know myself to know the needs and my own limits of what I can incorporate as a worship. So if it's something that doesn't work for me, then it's probably not the discipline and the spiritual practice that I need at that point in my life. Let's give some examples. There was a time where I was living out of my car for a couple of years. I was homeless and I got to see firsthand the way that society judges and looks, even well-wishers and do gooders who serve the homeless at weekly meals or outreach programs. Oftentimes they're judging or judging themselves.

Andy:

[00:41:39](#)

And I became quite aware of that, you know, even the subtle energies they carry around of, "Gosh, this is pathetic. I feel for them. I pity them. I'm glad this isn't me." That's in their situation, whatever it may be. You know, I became quite starkly aware of these things and it was hard for me to connect with human beings. It really was. But I was led to find great community. And communion in God's spirit with nature and with the animals. I was quite drawn to, native American Totemology. I loved, and was always drawn to apex Predator birds, the raptor birds like eagles and hawks and Falcons and such and kestrels, etc. And, I noticed that where I was living out of my car, I would regularly see these creatures in the sky or around me and they kept showing up.

Andy:

[00:42:37](#)

I learned through certain means, through gifted people that helped reveal to me that my native American totem per se, the way that I would be represented in an animal world rather, was as a wild falcon. Now, I started studying these animals and the way that they live and I started seeing them and noticing them, and what they mean. And alone without God's spirit, they would be nothing, they would just be animals showing up in my world, just encounters with wild species. But as the spirit would come in and whisper things to my mind in those encounters, that is what would transform my experience from something human to something divine. A practice in and of itself can be very destructive if not done for the right reasons. If I'm just doing something to do something, it's not like exercise.

Andy:

[00:43:49](#)

You see, I know a lot of us exercise—got to go exercise. And there's a bit of a grudging response from that, you know, of, oh, it's uncomfortable. I know it's better for me in the end. I know I'll feel better tomorrow. I know I've got to do this regularly to have a healthier body. That's not what I find spiritual discipline to be. Just doing something, the practice alone does not create any results without God's spirit, without God's presence and the divine presence that is in that. From modern scripture, from Doctrine and Covenants 162, the revelations. "You have already

been told to look to the sacraments, to enrich the spiritual life of the body. It is not the form of the sacraments that dispenses grace, but it is the divine presence that gives life." Again, that tells me and shows to me that it is not the practice alone that is the end itself. That is not why I am doing something, but the end result of any worship or practice is to connect with God. And that's the relationship we're talking about that we cannot force. We can just create this space and hope that God shows up however God's going to show up for us anyway.

- Robin: [00:45:22](#) Yes, yes, I so appreciate that. It cannot be forced and God shows up whenever, however God chooses. And so often it's a little bit different than we might expect. But always connects That key word, making space to connect. You've talked about several different things that touch on this integration of physical and spiritual, that holistic awareness of God's presence and how spiritual and physical are inextricably intertwined in the wholeness of who we are as beings. And you've also—you haven't used this term—but I would call it spiritual types, that we all have a spiritual type, just like different ways of learning. There's even a survey that you can take if you're interested to discover what your spiritual type might be. Um,.
- Andy: [00:46:23](#) Or multiple spiritual types (plural).
- Robin: [00:46:25](#) Yes, absolutely overlapping. And some people swim equally well in all the waters of spiritual types.
- Andy: [00:46:33](#) But, I would say, sorry to interrupt. I would say that even the desire to develop more abilities in other spiritual types is a very good long game as well. Like, I could see God's saying, "Oh, you are this spiritual type. Sure. That's great awareness. You want to develop in these other areas of spiritual type. Let's do it. I'm here for that too." You know, so I can see that as a possibility. But go on. Sorry.
- Robin: [00:47:03](#) Yeah, exactly. One of the points of discovering one dominant spiritual type is understanding where you aren't as strong in the other one's, and opening the door to how might one experiment with a different spiritual type or develop a capacity to function in a different spiritual type. And at the very least appreciation, the wide diversity of spiritual types, resident in a congregation or in a community or among our friends with whom we journey together through life. So one of the things that you've already brought up and that we've talked a little bit about online: I'd love you to take us into is this whole concept of sacramental living and sacraments, specifically. And how that

touches on this whole topic of awakening to God's presence. Can you take us down that path for a bit?

Andy: [00:48:09](#) I would love to, I'm going to trust you. It seems like we've already gone over our time our allotted one hour at least. And this is something that I feel like, just thinking about it right now, it gets me so excited that I'm sure we could do even another hour session alone on sacramental living in and of itself. But just to touch on it a little bit from my life, the sacraments are one of, if not the chief place of, practice and worship where I do consistently, not elusively, but consistently encounter the living, breathing Jesus Christ in my life. Again, it's so inexplicable. It's nothing I can force or control. I'm creating a space where the physical can meet the divine in union and then the results are just infinite. The breadth and depth to the experiences that I have are infinite.

Andy: [00:49:31](#) As I was describing alone in even my communion practice, the practice of showing up on the first Sunday of the month with Community of Christ. This is something I've chosen. And at times I've chosen not to. And for my own life, I can see, I love my journey and feel the closeness of the spirit in my life when I show up consistently. When I don't, it's not that God decides to punish me or deny me his spirit throughout the whole month until the next chance of it. That's not my experience with God. No. But the discipline of consistently showing up and not demanding, but opening up myself to those experiences that take place in the communion.

Andy: [00:50:26](#) I know that at times I've seen flash in my mind and in my heart and spirit these moments where deep aspects I've experienced of Christ's sacrifice and his walk with me. I've seen even as we—you and I have shared communion before—I have felt and seen Jesus and you together in one offering me communion and sacrament together. That's very sacred moments of my own experiences in my own walk there have been, like I say, moments where I'm taking the sacrament and there's just a very, very blissful joy and deep gratitude that overcome me and caused—pushed tears out of my eyes. And I feel deep reverence. Other sacraments include a healing and a laying on of hands and anointed. Now that to me is not just confined to Community of Christ or my experiences in Community of Christ. I recognize in my father, I've had a lifelong practice that he as the patriarch of our family, has often at needed times offered anointing and blessing.

Andy: [00:51:53](#) He's not part of Community of Christ church. The way I see it he's part of community of Christ at large. All those who call on

Christ's name. He is still active in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. But I will still accept anytime he's offering to me a blessing, a laying on of hands blessing. He has great spiritual gifts. These gifts are not confined solely to one organization. Another one of the sacraments that I draw upon and find great divine presence is the practice of evangelists blessing. As I was growing up, I received in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day saints an Evangelist's Blessing, which to me was one of the most exciting moments in my life. But years later into my twenties, I'm reading, I think I got that when I was 15 or 16. It was pronounced to me in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints their Patriarch had given me blessing. I was reviewing this over the years, but I got to a point in my twenties where I really wrote some pretty bad profanities on mine, on the copies of mine I had, and I'd rip it into as many pieces as I could and I'd curse God and shake my fist at the heavens because everything that was told me and promised me in that blessing seemed complete opposite.

Andy:

[00:53:23](#)

And that was another moment, an impetus for desire and longing. "God, you promised me these things. What do I gotta do that I'm not doing, What's? Why? Why is it so opposite? It's exactly the opposite in every way. Everything that you'll promise me and tell me here, what do we have to do to bring these things about?" Again, it was a journey of finding that delicate point between desire and demand that can be very uncomfortable. That's what I call trust. Trust. Oh and trust is so hard for us nowadays, human to human trust in church, leaders trust in each other, trust in ourselves. Sometimes trust is hard, and certainly trust in God. When we find that our experience with God is often elusive as you and I were describing and concurring, yes, it can be very elusive at times. And so we have a hard time trusting God.

Andy:

[00:54:22](#)

But that's the place of showing up between desire and demand or forced response. And so I don't know what it was. Maybe I happened on that place, then held it long enough to get a certain response. And I tell Ya, in the years since there has been the most marvelous transformation to where those things are, those promised blessings to me are coming to pass. And here's the funny part. For a lot of people that look and they're like, well, you're not even part of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day saints anymore. You're part of Community of Christ. And like, yes, but the God that I've come to know, the one who made me is not going to withhold those promised blessings just because of the filters and the system of which this gifted man was a part of when he pronounced that blessing. If I believe, if I desire, if I want them to come to pass and they are good and in



the will of God, yes, they will come to pass. I learned much later joining Community of Christ that this very specific individual blessing of evangelists blessing is not limited to one instance in your lifetime, but you can seek this blessing, this sacrament. You can seek it out at times in your life when you are so moved. Times of marriage, a loss, moving, a change in jobs, whatever. It doesn't have to be on that list. Whenever you feel led to seek out more life's knowledge through the sacrament of evangelist's blessing, I've had mine added onto twice.

Andy: [00:56:15](#) Now, the first occasion, I must confess, I walked in and I was thinking, okay, now that I'm part of the Community of Christ and God has led me into this community, he's, you know, I'm going to have this evangelists blessing experience and it's going to be the one I should have had when I was 15. Oh crap. I was expecting something that was going to wipe out that first blessing and be the real one I should have had all along. That's not how it went. It's become even more and more evident to me in these last several years how the blessings I get continue to weave together into one life blessing. Even beginning with that one I received when I was 15/16 in a different faith than I am now. And the richness and the individual connection that it offers me with my God. Sometimes it's very uncomfortable.

Andy: [00:57:17](#) Sometimes it's very rewarding. In the end it has got me addicted. I'm telling you like the world's best drug. I cannot imagine my life without these moments of spiritual awakening through sacraments that God shows up, that lead me on to the next moment when I encounter God to lead me onto understanding step by step how I can bring these practices and sacramental living into my own life every day and every moment into my work, into my interactions with other people. And truly they do start to transform. Even in the way that I've come to see the professions that I have in the world, whether it be teaching that I've done public and private, the professional skier and instructing that I've done, consulting that I've done for certain law firms or other groups and organizations, my acting and the people I meet on set or at auditions, every moment can become a surprise if I allow it to, if I allow God's spirit to enter that space.

Andy: [00:58:36](#) What Sacramental Living has done for me is help me to develop the ability to allow God's spirit to enter at any moment, to create the space for God to show up and surprise me. And boy, is it a surprise every time I tell you it is lovely. I had a friend, Ann Lee, we were talking about something. And she said, "Well, how, why is it that we are always amazed at God? How is it we are always amazed?" And she wasn't really asking the question.

Literally it was an expression from her. Isn't it just the most unthinkable wonder and mystery how God can continually surprises and amaze us in our lives, on every level, body, mind, and spirit in our jobs, in our families, in relationships, in our spiritual practices. As long as we create that space and allow God to show up in a way of God's choose. Anyway, we just touched a little bit on these sacramental ideas. We could go so deep into that, my dear. Do we have time? Do we not? What's going on?

Andy: [01:00:06](#) Well, we don't have time, but we will create time. I've written down here we need a whole episode on sacramental living...

Andy: [01:00:15](#) Oh my goodness, a whole series we could do episode after episode and we could get hundreds of thousands of people to give their input as well. This is truly, if we are told that sacraments are living, is the way to enrich the spiritual life of the body. Doctrine and Covenants 158 "Look especially to the sacraments, to enrich the spiritual life of the body, to seek greater understanding of my purposes in these sacred rights and prepare to receive a renewed confirmation of the presence of my spirit and spirit in your experiences of worship." This is on and on scripture after scripture about promises through Sacramental Living. Again, it's not the right or the performance or the act of doing it, that is the end result and nor is it that very act that creates the result. It is only creating space for connection with God.

Andy: [01:01:25](#) It is showing up. It is you sending me the time and space for this interview we had today and hoping that I'm going to show up and not dictating how I show up, but allowing me that right and privilege. It's like in our relationship, same thing with God. It's creating the space and the time in a way that is right for you individually or collectively with the group and then allowing God to show up and surprise us and heal us and sooth us and lead us on and draw us so close to him that we watch this mortal world and its concerns and confines melt away. And all I can do is desire day by day more and more to regain his presence. To see his face, to worship at his feet for all of time and eternity and beyond. That to me is something that's a hunger that I hope will carry me through all of eternity until I regain his presence. Anyway. Have we answered all the questions today? Have we at least

Robin: [01:02:47](#) Yes we have given it a thorough, thorough treatment of some type. Yes.

Andy: [01:02:51](#) Good, my dear. Wonderful.

- Robin: [01:02:53](#) So I want to thank you, Andy, for being with us today for helping us understand the importance of creating space to experience the unforced rhythms of grace, that truly sacred presence of God, and inviting God to have God's way with us. I so appreciated the many avenues and pathways of awakening to God's presence and spiritual practices that you have explored with us today and helped us understand. And of course a very special thanks to all of our listeners. If you would like to learn more about Andy's journey, check out his book. Dear Mr. Stephens, Letters of Love and of Hope available@amazon.com
- Andy: [01:03:49](#) Or at the website. You can go to my website and research more of it there if you'd like. And I also have some videos on that, but can I add one thing? If you did take away anything today, it was definitely not me or Robin that impressed it upon you. Your desire alone to listen and to join us on this podcast. Please let that be an indication to you of your desire, and longing for spiritual awakening, deepening your connection with God because it is an indication to me if you are listening that you are on that path right now and if something did touch your heart or your mind today, it only did so because we—all of us, Robin me and you—created this space for the spirit to enter our lives and move us and touch us even in small ways today.
- Robin: [01:04:46](#) Absolutely, and if you want to hear from other people who actively explore and practice spirituality in their lives, just look for Holy Grounds in the categories list on our website. I also want to make sure you heard Andy talk about Evangelist's Blessings. Community of Christ does offer the sacrament of Evangelist Blessing to anyone. You do not have to be a member of Community of Christ. If you'd like to learn more about that, just go to cofchrist.org and put Evangelist Blessing in the search box and that will take you where you want to go. Thank you again for joining us today. This is your host Robin Linkhart and you are listening to Project Zion Podcast. Go out and make the world a better place. Take good care. Bye. Bye.
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Speaker 1: [01:06:41](#) [inaudible]

Speaker 5: [01:06:52](#) [inaudible].