

Ableism

+Ableism: Ableism is systemic and/or individual discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities and/or people who are perceived to be disabled. Ableism characterizes people as defined solely by their disabilities and inferior to the non-disabled. On this basis, people are assigned or denied certain perceived abilities, skills, or character orientations. An example of systemic ableism are all the laws in the USA that keep disabled people impoverished.

+ [25 Examples of Ableism to Avoid as an Ally to People With Disabilities \(yahoo.com\)](https://www.yahoo.com)

1

Ableism (continued)

+ 'Ableism,' involves the discrimination against, failure to include, or misguided perceptions of non-disabled persons in regards to those of us who do experience forms of disabilities - whether the disabilities we experience are visible or not. Despite efforts such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, still not ratified by the U.S. Government), and other efforts, ableism still certainly continues to exist in America. ~ Thomas C Weiss, Disabled-World.com

+ One can have internalized ableism and be disabled just as one can have internalized oppression and be filled with self-hate around other core identities.

2

Ableism in the USA

+ [25 Examples of Ableism to Avoid as an Ally to People With Disabilities \(yahoo.com\)](#)

- + **1) Minimizing another's struggle for your comfort.**
- + **2) Discriminating against them for speaking about their diagnosis/challenges, or accusing them of just wanting attention or trying to manipulate others.**
- + **3) Thinking you understand how a condition affects someone without listening to them *and* researching their condition.**
- + **4) Comparing chronic/long-term disabilities to temporary/short-term injuries or illnesses.**
- + **5) Saying they should just "get over it" or "accept it" without recognizing the immense grief that can come with chronic illness / disability.**
- + **17) Blaming a person or their lifestyle for "creating" their disability. ****
- + **18) Thinking the disability is "not that bad" or is non-existent because you can't see it with your eyes.**
- + **** Spiritual by-passing or religious gaslighting -- (example: "if you only had enough faith...")**

3

Ableist Awful Things People Say:

- + Try to act more normal...
- + You are so inspirational...
- + You will never be able to -----
- + But you do not look disabled...
- + We need to find a cure for you...
- + Saying someone suffers from -----
- + So you do not have a real disability...
- + You are losing weight - you look great...
- + You should be grateful for your caregiver...
- + Isn't it nice - he wants to be friends with you...
- + You are a burden on your caregiver / society...
- + Stop complaining - other people have it worse...
- + If only you just tried harder, you would get better...
- + You are no fun - you never come and do things with us...
- + Saying you stand with/in solidarity with a cause or person...
- + Telling someone who can not walk, maybe you will walk one day...
- + I just raised awareness / donated for your condition on your behalf...
- + You mean you are a person with a disability, not a disabled person...
- + You are not like my child, so you can not talk to me about your disability...

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Links

- + [Neurodivergent Spoons & Forks: How to Explain Autism and Fatigue | by Danielle Sullivan | Mar, 2022 | Medium](#)
- + [What is Spoon Theory? \(autisticmama.com\)](#)
- + [Ableism in America Today | Disabled World \(disabled-world.com\)](#)

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People First Language & Disability Justice

- + Respect for the individual as to how they identify is given. It is each person's choice, how they refer to themselves. Ask, don't assume.
- + I say I am disabled, and I am autistic, just the way you might say you are good at math or are left-handed. Some of my disabilities are permanent, and some of them are the result of injury, and others are caused by my culture and environment. I was born autistic, and my autism is an integral part of who I am and how I am wired. At times, being autistic is an asset, and at other times, a liability and some aspects are a disability. "Disabled" is not the same thing as being "differently-abled". People can be both! For many of us, being referred to as "special needs" and "differently abled" are experienced as patronizing and offensive attempts to ignore or minimize a disabled person's reality and identity.
- + If you have met one autistic person, you have only met one autistic person.

6

Neurodiversity vs. Neurodivergent

- + The neurodiversity paradigm is a view of [autism](#) as a different way of being rather than as a disease or disorder that must be cured. Autistic people are considered to have neurocognitive differences which give them distinct strengths and weaknesses, and are capable of succeeding when appropriately accommodated and supported. The belief is that efforts to eliminate autism should not be compared, for example, to curing cancer but instead to the antiquated notion of curing left-handedness. Neurodiversity advocates are opposed to medical research for a cure, believing that it will lead to eugenics, and instead support research that helps autistic people thrive as they are. For example, *NeuroTribes* author Steve Silberman noted a lack of research in regards to seizure-controlling drugs and autistic brains; that sensory differences in autistic people were unheard of until Temple Grandin spoke about her experiences; and that only a small percentage of research funding goes towards the needs of autistic adults.
- + All people are neurodiverse. A neurodivergent person is someone **whose neurological development and state are atypical**, usually viewed as abnormal or extreme. The term was coined in the neurodiversity movement as an opposite for "neurotypical".
- + Neurodiversity is an approach to learning and disability that argues diverse neurological conditions are result of normal variations in the human genome. This portmanteau of neurological and diversity originated in the late 1990s as a challenge to prevailing views of neurological diversity as inherently pathological, instead asserting that neurological differences should be recognized and respected as a social category on a par with gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability status. Today, neurodiversity is broadly defined as an approach to learning and disability that suggests diverse [neurological conditions](#) appear as a result of normal variations in the human genome. Neurodiversity advocates promote support systems (such as inclusion-focused services, accommodations, communication and assistive technologies, occupational training, and independent living support) that allow those who are neuro-divergent to live their lives as they are, rather than being coerced or forced to adopt uncritically accepted ideas of normality, or to conform to a clinical ideal.
- + Different people think differently - not just because of differences in culture or life experience, but because their brains are "wired" to work differently.
- + Disabled World (Disabled-World.com)

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Neurodiversity – a diversity of perspectives!

- + Neurodiversity, or ND, refers to variation in the human brain regarding sociability, learning, attention, mood and other mental functions in a non-pathological sense. It was coined in 1998 by sociologist Judy Singer, who helped popularize the concept along with journalist Harvey Blume. It emerged as a challenge to prevailing views that certain things currently classified as neurodevelopmental disorders are inherently pathological and instead, adopts the social model of disability, in which societal barriers are the main contributing factor that disables people. This view is especially popular within the autism rights movement. The subsequent neurodiversity paradigm has been controversial among disability advocates, with opponents saying that its conceptualization is based on wishful thinking and may downplay, ignore or even romanticize disabling or serious mental conditions and illnesses, as well as argue that the idea is largely endorsed by those who either self-diagnose or are with low support needs and does not reflect the realities of individuals who have higher support needs.

8

Spoon Theory: Neurodiverging | Danielle Sullivan

- + Spoon theory is a metaphor that is used to describe the amount of mental or physical energy a person has available for daily activities and tasks. It was developed by Christine Miserandino in 2003 as a way to express how it felt to have lupus. She used spoons to provide a visual representation of units of energy that a person might have and how chronic illness forces her to plan out her days and actions in advance, so as not to run out of energy, or spoons, before the end of the day. It has since been applied to other phenomena, such as other disabilities, mental health issues, marginalization, and other factors that might place an extra – often unseen – burden on some individuals.

9

Fork Theory (Jenrose on Tumblr)

- + *"You know the phrase, 'Stick a fork in me, I'm done,' right? Well, Fork Theory is that one has a Fork Limit, that is, you can probably cope okay with one fork stuck in you, maybe two or three, but at some point you will lose it if one more fork happens.*
- + *A fork could range from being hungry or having to pee to getting a new bill or a new diagnosis of illness. There are lots of different sizes of forks, and volume vs. quantity means that the fork limit is not absolute. I might be able to deal with 20 tiny little escargot fork annoyances, such as a hangnail or slightly suboptimal pants, but not even one 'you poked my trigger on purpose because you think it's fun to see me melt down' pitchfork."*
- + The Fork Theory focuses on obstacles, and then on the ways to remove them.

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Fork Theory for Neurodivergent Folx

- + Jenrose specifically calls out being hungry, cold, having to use the bathroom, an irritating clothing tag, and pants that don't fit exactly right, as some of those forks. I've definitely dealt with all of these as forks in my own life. The nice thing is, if you can manage to notice them — which I admit is tricky and took practice for my autistic brain — you can have a chance of addressing them. Removing even one small fork can solve your overwhelm in one fell swoop on a lucky day.
- + There are plenty of other things that can act as forks for autistic folks, like the lights being too bright, a weird smell in the room, someone breathing too loudly, or too many fans on. We have adaptations such as headphones to reduce noise, turning off the lights, moving to another environment that is a bit quieter, and having routines that are built for our comfort and well-being. All of these adaptations remove forks from our lives and decrease the likelihood that we're going to have sensory overload, overwhelm, or a meltdown.

11

Fork & Spoon Theories: The grand unification is “Spork theory”.

- + With the Fork Theory, it seems more about balance and achieving a state of equilibrium. I'm getting rid of all the tiny forks as fast as I can, which makes it just that little bit more possible to deal with the larger ones. There might still be a giant pitchfork I can't remove, which is awful, and I can lose a lot of my energy to it. But I do have some agency over the little forks, and their causes. The Fork Theory gives us a way to get in front of some of the obstacles, help ourselves out a bit more, and maybe save our energy for when the pitchforks appear.
- + While I think that the Fork Theory improves upon the Spoon Theory, and works better for me, *both* models are incredibly important to the disability, chronic fatigue, chronic illness, and autistic communities. The two models together show different aspects of energy usage, and the how able we are to access and address our own well-being.

12

Perspectives/Models of Disability

- + Medical model: an impairment or biological condition arising from a tragedy or due to a physiological disorder or behavioral factors (most systems in the USA use this model to determine eligibility for healthcare, support services, employment and education—SSI, VR, Medicaid, IEP's, etc.)
- + Social Model: looks at broader socioeconomic issues (race, gender, age, class, etc.) and the intersections of culture (identity, values, language, etc.) that create disability/barriers to belonging and self-determination and thus are disabling for individuals, families and communities
- + Affirmative Model: a recent derivative of the social model, which confronts the prevailing view of disability as personal tragedy and the stigmatization of difference/illness, and promotes the realization of positive non-tragic disabled identities
- + (Disability and Culture: An International and Inter-professional Perspective, edited by Patricia Smith, copyright 2015)

13

Theology of Disability

- + A theology of disability, rather than a theology of ableism, may have very similar concepts of God, but differ widely in terms of theological anthropology, and what it means to be made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1).
- + A TD is an embodied/Incarnational spirituality. It affirms that creation is fundamentally Good; wholeness/balance/human flourishing comes in many different shapes and sizes; diversity (biodiversity, neurodiversity, cultural diversity) is at the core of the attributes of the Divine will for creation; our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit; a Risen and Scarred, hole-in-His-side Jesus, in His particular resurrected body, models this affirmation of our disabled bodies being also whole and holy.

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Theological Models of Ableism & Disability

- + Autistic Thinking In the Life of the Church, Stewart Rapley, copyright 2021
- + Moral: assigns an aspect of choice and deficit (often religiously justified) to disability, with usually a negative moral value, thus implying a need for healing, repentance, forgiveness, and in extremes, exorcism (Disciples ask, who sinned? The man born blind or his parents?, healing the man's son who exhibits seizure-like behaviors thru casting out the evil spirit)
- + Medical: understands bodies to be like machines, with disability something akin to a disorder or defect in function that needs fixing or cure (healing miracles)
- + Social: identifies the disability/issue and the corrective as grounded in/caused by the environment/societal structures (parable of barren fig tree)
- + Limits: normalizes limits as part of being mortal, we all face limits, and disability locates the limits differently for people (Rev. Deborah B. Creamer) 1 Corinthians 13:12
- + Diversity: Neurodiversity is an aspect of biodiversity, and essential for evolution and human flourishing
- + Incarnational: God became flesh (John 1:1,14); God dwells in us and with us and we in God (Acts 17:28); all bodies are sacred temples for the Divine and as such can glorify God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) Jesus' resurrected body has scars (John 20:27)

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Embodied Spiritual Sensibilities

- + A suggested curriculum (for ages 0 to 99) suitable for Lent/Advent/VBS by Rev. Melinda Baber
- + 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple^{al} of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

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Day/Lesson One: Hands

- + Discuss the sense of touch
- + Psalm 24:4 "Give me clean hands and a pure heart, O God."
- + Ask: what do we do with our hands?
- + Answer: some people talk with their hands! (sign language <https://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-signs/d/deaf.htm>)
- + some people read with their hands! (Braille <http://www.brailleauthority.org/alphabet/alphabet.pdf>)
- + and some people don't have hands, or have prosthetic hands!
- + Ask: how do people love God with their hands?
- + Answer: we can shake hands or hold hands, in singing, in friendship, in prayer, and use our hands in deeds of kindness. We play musical instruments with our hands (have some simple ones, drum, recorder, maracas, etc. for example and to try), solve puzzles, math problems, swing a baseball bat, do chores, paint, draw, count money, make our beds, cook, etc..
- + Discuss different ways to use our hands: Some kids/adults like to flap their hands to work off excitement or anxiety. Babies and kids and grown-ups like to suck their hands or their thumbs, to soothe themselves or calm down when they are tired or scared or sad.
- + We talk about God's Hands. (Psalm 31: 5, 15) The hymn: Jesus hands were kind hands. They healed the sick. Wrote in the sand with his hand. Broke bread and blessed the cup with his hands. saved the lost. Took nails on the cross. showed his hands/wrists to Thomas as proof he was alive, resurrected from the dead!
- + Hands can come in all colors sizes and shapes! What if you didn't have two hands, but only one, or none? Do you think you could play sports? Or paint? Have picture of football player/athletes with only one hand or no hands. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JpvoHxopW7s> (Jamarion Styles, playing basketball for his Boca Raton school team in 2017) [No Arms, No Problem for Sumeyye Boyaci | Para Swimming | Paralympic Games](#)
- + Sumeyye Boyaci from Turkey, para-Olympic gold medalist swimmer 2020

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Day/Lesson Two: Mouth

- + Show prints or copies of painting done by artists who paint with mouth or foot.
- + [Mouth & Foot Painting Artists](#)
- + CBC Dec 2019
- +
- + **Second Sunday: Mouth, sense of taste, thirst, hunger.**
- + Psalm 34: O, Taste and see that the Lord is Good! All who are hungry & thirsty for righteousness, come, eat and drink freely. Matthew 5:6
- + What do you like to taste or eat? with your tongue, have you ever licked the frosting bowl? Name the 5 different tastes on the human tongue: sweet, bitter, sour, salty, and savory. Name some other sensations: wet and dry.
- + Some people can't eat or drink with their mouths. Give example of someone who has had a feeding tube, and explain or show what it looks like, that goes directly into the stomach, and the person gets her nutrition in liquid through her tube.
- + what does it mean, to taste that God is Good?
- + the Bible says that the word of God, the commandments, the teachings from Jesus, are like bread/food for our souls. (Have participant look up a Bible passage that mentions this.)
- + the Bible says that our soul desires God and needs God like we thirst for water or desire or hunger for food, like bread. Jesus is like bread from heaven for us to live on. Just as real actual bread gives us energy when we eat it, to live, Jesus gives us life-- the energy of God, the Spirit of God to live. When we eat the bread and drink the grape juice at Communion, we are tasting that the Lord is good.
- + Thirst: Even without eating by mouth, we can experience thirst. John 4:7-11 talks about spiritual thirst, and living water. What might it mean to spiritually thirst?
- + We "taste" that to live in the forgiveness and love of Jesus is good! and when we live according to the teachings of Jesus, we find that to be Good for us. Life "tastes" Good! And we don't need to have a mouth to eat, or to taste the goodness of God.

18

Day/Lesson Three: Nose

- + can you wriggle or wrinkle your nose?
- + what scents you like to smell? BBQ? cookies baking in the oven? dead skunks? pie? perfume? essential oils? Bring different essential oils or scented candles to take turns smelling.
- + Discussion: the people in Jesus day used special scents to worship God. They had incense to burn, to symbolize their prayers were a sweet pleasant fragrance to God. Exodus 25:6, Ex 30:1, Psalm 141:2
- + They also sacrificed animals and roasted the meat on an open fire and believed the smell of the roasted meat from the animals sacrificed made God happy. Deut 33:10
- + Jesus was given frankincense when he was born, by the Magi, as a symbol of his majesty and divinity, as King of the Jews.
- + This was used in the temple worship, and in the palace of kings, because of its healing properties.
- + What we smell, changes our brain chemistry! <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/awaken-your-senses/how-scent-affects-mood/>
- + It goes to a part of the brain that controls how we smell, and is linked to our brain's capacity to be happy, to concentrate, and to form memories. Smell is the first sense to develop in a baby, and is usually the last sense people have when they are dying. But many people lose their sense of smell, due to illness, or old age. Smelling something is a very powerful way to jog your memory of something. If you smell something, it can remind you of the people or things from long ago, when you first smelled it. and remembering God and the promises of God is critical to thriving in a world that denies God.
- + Ask* what are some advantages to not having a sense of smell? What are some things that are stinky that you wish you never smelled???
- + Answer: If I couldn't smell, I could more readily enjoy being a garbage collector! Or a nurse! Or a mom changing dirty diapers!
- + Ask: What smells do you associate with your faith? what about Christmas? what smells remind you that it is church, or Christmas time? Or Easter?
- + Answer: candles, flowers, evergreens, pine trees, ham, turkey, pies, essential oils, etc.
- +

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Day/Lesson Four: Eyes

+ (sense of sight)

- + 2 Chronicles 16:9 "the eyes of the Lord scan the whole world to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him."
- + let us talk about eyes! they are amazing! Even the ones that are unable to see clearly, are amazing, to me! <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-physics/chapter/the-human-eye/>
- + Talking points for discussion: I wear glasses, and sunglasses! anybody here not wear glasses? Contacts? Binoculars?
- + Ask: what do you like to see? what's the animal that can see the farthest? did you know eagles can see from nearly 2 miles up in the air to the ground to spot their prey?
- + what do you like using your eyes to see?
- + Jesus said, in Matthew 6:22, "the eye is the lamp of the body, if the eye is healthy (single) the whole body is full of light."
- + In Jesus day, to give the evil eye was to wish evil on another person, to be selfish and mean to them, to curse them. To be ashamed, sad or remorseful was to have downcast eyes. To have a generous or kind eye towards people was called a single eye, was to have a focus of goodness, the opposite of the evil eye.
- + Hebrews 12:2, "we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." Jesus is the opposite of evil. The Bible says that the eyes of our hearts can be opened to know the love God has for us. Do you think there is a literal eye on your literal heart in your chest? No, it is a metaphor for how we can feel and sense and be aware of or intuit or know inside us that God loves us. Many people are what's called "visual learners". They have to see something to understand it best. This is not the only way to learn!
- + Share (John 9:1-3) the story of the man born blind, and explain that in that day and culture, many people/cultures taught that any kind of illness or disability was the result of sin, and was a punishment or curse from God. Reassure them that JESUS says No. Jesus taught that just having a disability or being differently abled is not the result of sin and does not mean you are bad or have done anything wrong. The man had done nothing wrong, nor had his parents sinned. He was loved just as he was by God/Jesus. And so are we. Any ability, gift, illness, limitation, or life circumstance is another opportunity to show the works of God in our lives. God's glory was evident in this man from day one, while he was blind, and after he was given sight.
- + Fanny Crosby was a famous Methodist woman who rejoiced that God had given her blindness as a way to glorify Jesus. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/poets/fanny-crosby.html>
- + https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny_Crosby
- + Ask: what might those works of God be in your life?
- + Answer: deeds of love, faith, hope, courage, grit, kindness, respect, offering friendship, offering forgiveness, wanting to be a disciple of Jesus; anything can be an opportunity to trust in God, to glorify God and demonstrate God's goodness and the love of Jesus to others; everything in life that we are able to do or not able to do.

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Day/Lesson 5: Ears

- + Discuss the sense of hearing/noticing vibrations with our bodies
- + Ask: Can you wiggle your ears? Can you make a candle with the wax in your ears? (No, you can't!) Can you hear a whisper? Do you like loud music? What sounds do you not like to hear?
- + [Matthew 13:15](#)
- + *For this people's senses have become calloused, and they've become hard of hearing, and they've shut their eyes so that they won't see with their eyes or hear with their ears or understand with their minds, and change their hearts and lives that I may heal them.*
- + Being aware and listening to others is an important ability. Using the sense of hearing to respond to the needs of others in love, not indifference, is what Jesus shows us we must do.
- + Hearing, if we have that sense, is an important ability, and is on a spectrum. People can be hearing acute, or hard of hearing, or completely deaf. Like all the other senses, none are essential for faith in God. But if we have them, they are meant to be gifts used to love God and love others as ourselves. Hearing can enhance our faith and love, because what we listen to, like what we eat, helps to shape our mood and character. Music can uplift, or bring you down. Harsh words can dishearten you. Loving words can strengthen you, give you courage. God's promises are good to hear. A friend's laughter. The words, I forgive you, I love you, thank you, those are really good for us to hear. and tell others, so they can hear it, too. "
- + [1 Peter 3:12](#)
- + *The Lord's eyes are on the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord cannot tolerate those who do evil.*
- + The Bible also says that SILENCE, rather than noise and talking and music, simply being quiet, and still, and making no sounds is good for the soul. Silence is heavenly! (Rev. 8:1)
- + (Psalm 46:10) Being still and quiet and hearing nothing can be just what we need that allows us to actually notice, or "hear" God. I hear God in the sounds of nature, like running water, or wild geese calling, and my own breathing.
- + <https://www.classicalwcrb.org/blog/2016-03-04/four-composers-and-the-music-they-never-heard>
- + What are some vibrations you can "hear/feel" without your ears hearing it?

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Day/Week/Lesson Six: The Sixth Sense

- + experiencing God -- the Bible is a collection of stories of ways people have experienced or known God. We know God in Jesus. The Bible says God has revealed God's self in Jesus; Colossians 1:15-20.
- + God will reveal God's Presence to us, directly and indirectly. We can develop the sense of Awareness/Mindfulness. It will never contradict what God has already revealed to us in Jesus. For example, Jesus said God is Good. So, God will never reveal God's Self as evil, or direct a person to do evil. That would contradict Goodness.
- + The Bible reveals that using the metaphors of the physical body's senses. God can "speak" to us, show us visible and tangible signs, about the things of God/ a revelation of God's presence, power and love.
- + Our spiritual sense is connected to our bodies, and is also independent of our bodies. It is available to everyone regardless of intellect, or body type or level of disability. It is the awareness of God in our lives and world. It is important, because we need it to be able to be the people God wants us to be, to change our hearts and minds so we can be Jesus' disciples.
- + "Hearing" God in our hearts and when we are praying, requires the ability to have an inner ear and an inner eye. An ability to listen to your own thoughts, feelings, and dreams. God speaks with a still small voice. Not a big loud voice. By that, the Bible means that God rarely writes His will for you in the sky like a skywriter plane does. God isn't going to appear right in front of you with an angel. That only happens sometimes. Not often. God is most often speaking to us in a way that requires us to be mindful. This often requires us to be focused, and attentive, to notice and be aware of the Divine within and without.
- + And to have our thoughts directed towards hearing Him, and our desires centered on God's desires. How do you desire God? What does that feel like?
- + The Bible says that seeking God is the way we will find God. We do this in prayer, in fasting, in acts of love and kindness and creativity, in service, creating justice and wellbeing for ourselves and others. It can be walking a dog, or planting a tree, or washing dishes, or singing, or sewing. What are some ways you cultivate God's presence?
- + Example of hearing God's guidance: it is like a 6th sense, you just hear or KNOW something, it is a thought that comes to you, not from you. or a knowing, that answers your question about what you need to do. Jesus told us: "My sheep hear My voice."
- + Give a personal example of having been aware of or sensed the will of God telling you to do something. (If it directly involves the Bible, even better.)

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