

Section One

RULES FOR FINDING FAITH

To appreciate experiences, you need a guide. Appreciating architectural genius requires a guide who explains to you the differences between brickwork that is flemish bond (alternating stretchers—which is where bricks are placed long side—and headers—which is where bricks are placed short side) and basket weave (where pairs of bricks are laid vertically and then another pair horizontally). In fact, you don't notice the differences in brickwork until someone points this out to you. Appreciating the nose (the smell) on a glass of wine requires a person who can invite you to find grass cuttings and gooseberries in a Sauvignon Blanc or the blackcurrants in a glass of red Zinfandel. Appreciating the achievement of football requires a guide who can explain the blitz, zone read, and fumble. Without these guides, we just don't see the depth and texture of life. Without the guide, bricks are just bricks; wine is just wine; and football is just football. We stop at the surface and don't dig deeper.

In the first six rules, you will find an invitation to see the normal and mundane in a new and different way. It is an invitation to look beyond the surface experience of life to see depth and texture. Look hard enough and you will start to see the transcendent and the spiritual all around you.

Disconnect from the tech

Most of us live with our heads stuck in the immediate. Our senses are bombarded by sounds and sights generated by screens. We are plugged in—listening to music or a podcast or audiobook; we are sliding our hands over a phone to read the latest text, e-mail, and Facebook status update; and we are moving from a laptop to a tablet to a smartphone constantly. Never is there a moment when we are not connected.



So let us start by putting all this stuff down. Let us disconnect from our virtual world and engage with the real world. Pause and focus for a moment on the moment. Find the quietest place you can and listen attentively to the silence. Hear how interesting and deep the silence is. The great spiritual guides of humanity invite us to become conscious of our bodies—focus especially on the miracle of breath. Feel the action of inhaling, followed by the action of exhaling. Move around your body inviting each part to relax. Do this by tensing an area, for example, your feet and ankles, and then instruct the area to relax. Move from your feet up to your waist, right up to your shoulders and head. Marvel at the complex story that science tells about our bodies. Notice the miracle of yourself.

This is basic meditation; it is what the Buddhists would call “mindfulness.” Mindfulness is an awareness of the moment and everything that is going on inside you; it is entering deep inside, while making no judgments and acknowledging the feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. If you go no further in this book, then this basic practice is worth learning. The health benefits of mindfulness are considerable.

But we want you to notice something more. We want you to allow the silence to embrace you. Allow yourself to marvel at who you are. And at a stroke, you have started the journey to faith. The embrace of silence is the presence of God surrounding you; the miracle of you is the gift of being made possible by God. Welcome to the journey of faith.



Walk, linger, and marvel

We are always going somewhere. The journey is often a means to an end. For most of us the journey is a drive. If we walk at all, then it consists of the stroll to a car to then be transported from home to wherever—the grocery store. This rule invites us to walk with no regard for the destination. Find a park, maybe a river, perhaps just an interesting street—and walk slowly, pausing to admire the grass that peeks through a crack in the sidewalk, or the tree that was there a long time before you were born, or the bird chirping on the edge of a wall. Everywhere you look there are wonders of life abounding.

The story of life is amazing. Through an elaborate process of natural selection the biodiversity of the world came to be. Life is a journey of 3.8 billion years. Just take that in. The faith instinct sees life as intended. God's chosen mechanism was evolution. Everything has purpose.

Seeing the world around us as intended is an act of faith. We are taking the risk of seeing things differently. Pause and marvel—suddenly, we matter.



Enjoy the company of someone you love

Solitude and silence are packed with signs of the transcendent; they make you aware that you are part of a bigger picture—that living is part of a bigger story that comes from above and surrounds us. But so is company. Now you need to find someone you can love—a friend, spouse, child, parent, or sibling. Enter into a conversation where you explore the other. Every person is a deep well of complexity. So explore this person you love—remember together, laugh together, and discover together.

So what is love? Is it just a trick of the evolutionary process to encourage parents to care for their young or spouses to reproduce? Or is it more? Reflect on the rich conversations you have had with the one you love. Think about the feelings deep inside of you that you have for the special one. The Christian claim is that love is our purpose for being; it is the reason the world was made. The God, which is goodness and love at the heart of the universe enabling everything that is and sustaining everything that is, invites us to discover love. We are created out of love in order to love. We are hardwired for connection with others. The love two people share is a glimpse of our divinely intended purpose for being.

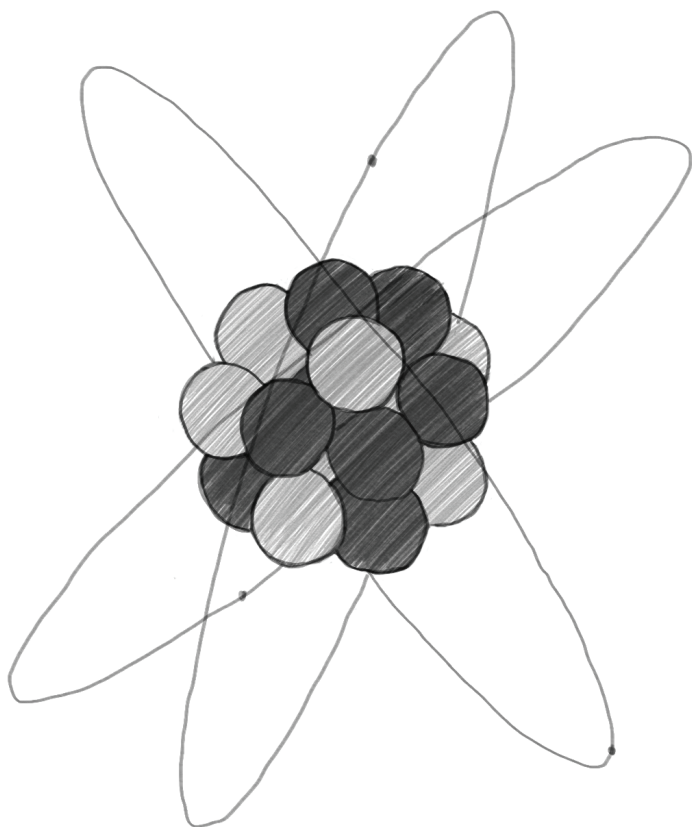


Let the music take you higher

What do **Bach, Beethoven**, Handel, Haydn, Liszt, and Rachmaninoff all have in common? What do Bono, Faith Hill, Kristin Chenoweth, and the Jonas Brothers all have in common? The answer is not simply that they were amazing composers, but also that they were persons of faith. It was George Steiner who observed that great musicians have an heightened sensitivity to the transcendent; very few are atheists. They really believe that their music is a discovery; there are certain notes that are just right for the piece that they are seeking to birth. And of course, as we listen to great music, we cannot help being lifted out of ourselves into the realm of the transcendent. As one closes one's eyes, the music does indeed take you higher.

And all of this is made possible by the simple notations on a page. A musical score looks so flat upon the page. Yet when these notations are taken, interpreted, and voiced, out from the page comes forth music that resonates with the chords of our souls. Music has power. Music can capture our feelings for us (think how often it is music that helps us get over a relationship breakup); music can aid recollection (think how often we listen to that old childhood song that instantly brings to mind where we were and what we were doing); and music can cut to our very souls (those moments when the music is all we are hearing).

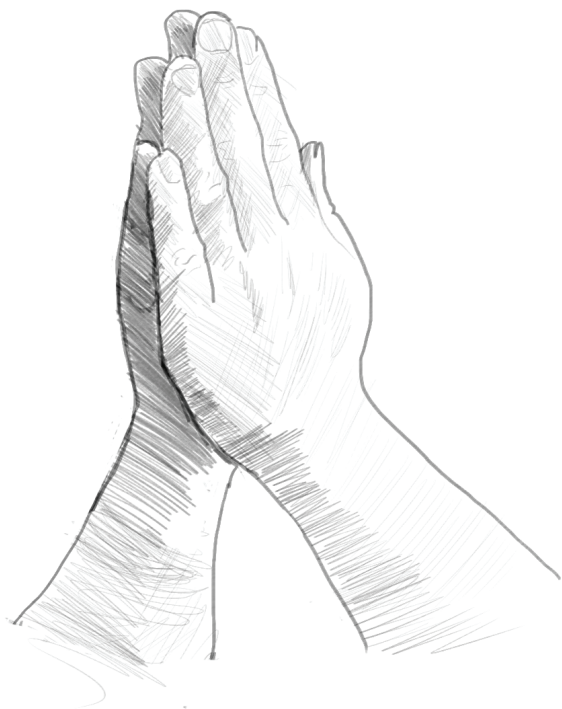
Music is a glimpse into the divine. It is a gateway; it is a vehicle into the transcendent.



Recognize that we are infinitely more than just complex bundles of atoms that came from nowhere and go nowhere

Faith is the act of seeing the world in a certain way. It is the capacity to see that life is not just the immediate, the ephemeral, but it is much more. Life has texture; life has depth. How do we make sense of this depth? One option is the answer of reductionist science. Everything is made up of complex bundles of atoms that come from nowhere and ultimately go nowhere. There are many problems with this. Quantum mechanics talks about a universe that is much more mysterious and puzzling. At the quantum level, there is unpredictability and openness. But more, reductionist science just feels wrong. Love is not just a trick of the evolutionary process to encourage us to reproduce. Music is not just a remarkable human achievement. Mind is not just reducible to brain activity. Life's depth and texture point to something more than that; they point toward the transcendent.

Faith affirms we are in an intended universe. We are meant to be here. The Goodness and Love at the heart of the universe wanted humanity to emerge. The response of faith need not conflict with the insights we are learning from science. Antibiotics work and, when you have an infection, are great. Evolution is true; the multiverse might be true. Truths learned through science are part of the picture. But we locate our scientific picture of the world within a bigger framework of the transcendent. One that we correctly intuit (or sense) is part of the truth about reality.



Allow yourself to pray

P **Prayer is the connection of the soul** with the transcendent (the height and depth of everything) that is all around us. The soul is our fundamental self; it is our core being and identity. Prayer happens when we open our inner being to conversation—to communion—with the loving embrace of the transcendent. Prayers sometimes use words, but, perhaps, more often do not. In fact, it might feel quite strange to speak with words at first. Therefore, especially at its core, prayer is the act of enjoying quiet, becoming conscious of the fact that we are loved, and allowing that love to surround us.

Prayer is felt and experienced. Thinking too much is unhelpful. Put aside your pictures of God and suspend your questions for a moment. Instead just allow the desire for love to come forth from your soul. This can be either verbal or silent. And then allow yourself to sense that God's love is present, real, and surrounding you.

The first conscious prayer is the baby step of faith. It is the act of relocating our lives away from the mundane and immediate and into the real and transcendent. Now we are living our lives on multiple levels—both in the immediate moment and the deeper more textured level of the transcendent. Welcome to the world of faith.

