

Preparation for G243 – Creating Sacred Space

In the hustle and bustle of the holidays, we often lose site of the sacred. This session will help you to create sacred space for yourself.

Questions:

- 1) Read the excerpt from a sermon on the back of the page.
- 2) Name some sacred spaces you have experienced.

- 3) Tell about how a specific sacred space has affected you. What do you feel? What did you do there? Where was it? Was it man-made or natural?

- 4) How was experiencing the sacred spaces created by others different from creating a sacred space yourself?

- 5) Think about creating a sacred space for yourself. Follow Greg Nooney's steps:
 - a. Reflect on a specific set of experiences. It may be past holidays, or relationships, or nature. Assign meaning to those experiences.
 - b. Think about what you want to create in your space. Calm, inspiration, love, healing, ...
 - c. Create a ritual to define your space.

From “Creating Sacred Space” by Greg Nooney 11/14/2004, First Unitarian Church of Sioux City (Abridged)

So in order to complicate things sufficiently in order to better understand them, I thought I would discuss this story from [Genesis \(28: 10-22\)](#). It might be useful to note that in the text just before this passage, Jacob has been blessed by his father Isaac and sent out into the world to find a wife and get on with his life. So he sets off and gets tired and so lies down to sleep. What happens? He has a dream of a ladder with angels going up and down and God shows up and promises that he will have lots of children and also promises to stay with him and give him a bunch of land. Please remember though that this is a dream, not a vision. He is clearly asleep when this happens. So what does Jacob do? He reflects on his experience and assigns meaning to it. He could have said, whoa, that was weird dream, now what is for breakfast?

What did he do? He took the rock that he had been using as a pillow, and sets it up as a monument, and creates a ritual around this rock, by naming the place Bethel which means house of god, and by pouring oil on the rock. He takes his dream, assigns meaning to it, and then creates sacred space. He defines the rock, which had a few minutes previously been a rather inefficient pillow, as a monument, as a sacred rock which now defines this space as sacred, of God. ...

One might wonder how confident he was of this process by what he says next. He goes through the “if” statements. IF God will stay with me on my journey, IF God will arrange for me to have plenty of food and clothing (no simple task in those days for someone on a journey), and IF God will protect me and keep me safe throughout the whole journey until I return home to my father (another big IF), then and only then will I recognize him as my god and define the new stone as god’s house. Then he does a bit of haggling even though in the dream this god had not put on any conditions, but rather made all these promises freely. Jacob says I’ll keep 90% and give you 10%. So from what position is he haggling? Are there other gods lining up offering him other goods and services? Perhaps he is trying to keep his options open in case he gets a better offer before the journey is over. At any rate, I say this to illustrate that his Intentionality is far from perfect. His motivation is suspect; his thoughts are less than pure; his commitment is reserved at best. It is not even clear if he believes in this Lord or god. It is not like he hasn’t heard all about him from his father Isaac and his granddad Abraham. He still is keeping his options open. ...

And it is the same for us. I really want to emphasize this. We do not have to believe in God; we do not have to even believe in Intentionality in order to practice it.

So how does one practice Intentionality and create sacred space? I do think we can learn from this passage in Genesis. First we assign meaning to our experiences. Secondly, we set our mind to the highest reaches of love and healing (or whatever we want to create in the space.) Thirdly we create a ritual to bring our intention out of our minds into this three dimensional dense world, and we define that space. One can add if one wishes some clearing of the space in the beginning, and some ongoing maintenance of the space at the end, and that is basically all there is to it. So in summary:

Frame of mind + High resolve + action in this three dimensional world = Intentionality.

To read the complete sermon go here <http://siouxcityuu.org/sacredspace.htm>