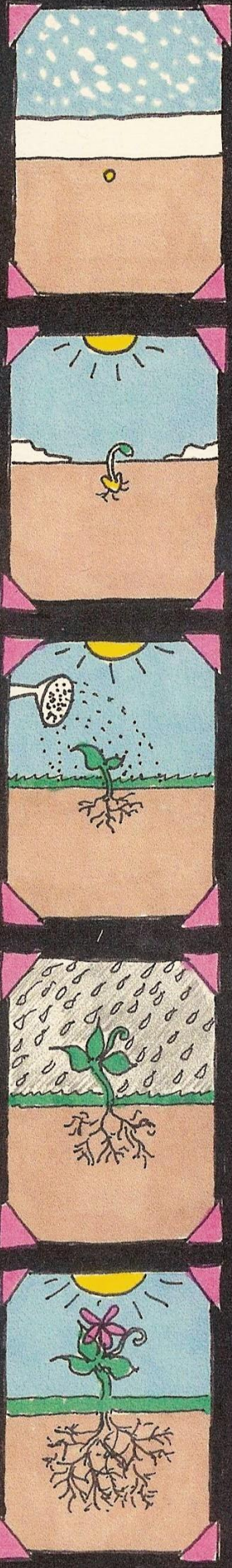
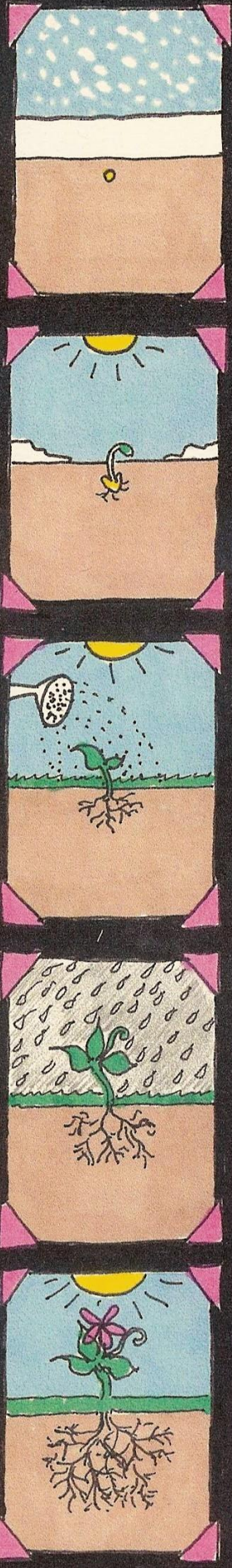


March 10

When learning to do almost anything – play basketball, speak a foreign language, crochet, play the piano – I expect that a lot of practice will be required. It takes a lot of dribbling to become good at dribbling, a lot of “Comment allez-vous” to hold a conversation in French, a lot of stitches to develop skills to make a sweater, a lot of time at the keyboard to play a Beethoven sonata. I accept this as truth about life.

Somehow when it comes to spiritual life, I tend not to think so much in terms of practice. It’s as if I expect that just *deciding* to be a better person will make me one automatically, I tend to feel elated after reading about spiritual growth, as though a book could do the job of transforming my life and establishing a closer relationship between me and my creator. But then I find myself falling back into the same





habits of mind and behavior that keep my focus away from God.

One thing that has impressed me about some Buddhist teachings is the emphasis on spiritual practices – on *practicing*. The untrained mind, as their saying goes, is like a drunken monkey bit by a scorpion. The mind needs to be trained so that it does not dart in all directions, whip itself into frenzies of anxiety, remain unconscious of important events and emotions, miss priorities, forget, and lose itself in the world. As Christians we know the expression, “Be still, and know that I am god” (Psalm 46:10). A mind that is a “drunken monkey” cannot keep still. Yet how can we be still without practice?

This booklet contains a length of yarn – purple in honor of Christ and Easter. Consider tying it around your wrist today to help you practice at stillness. Whenever your eye falls upon the yarn, notice where your mind has been flying and bring it back to the present moment, to the

stillness at your center, to God. If you're like me, your mind has some favorite destinations, not always pleasant, either – fears, plans, memories, nagging thoughts – that easily carry you away. Allow the yarn to help you *practice* calling your mind back, to bring it to full attention.



Jan Seabaugh

