

Collage of Voices 24

Set One: Embracing what it means to be human

We desire more than we need genetically and more than just survival, to be better, to help people without gaining anything in return, to be the best at something unique. We create beyond the necessary, we create art, we design architecture and we create music. All things that we don't need but that is how we express ourselves. Everyone brings what they represent to the table and that creates the human experience. ES

A Beloved community can recognize it's not heaven on earth and isn't perfect, it can see its flaws and can love and support itself through the process of change, growth, and healing. We can work toward the community by holding each other in love and support. We need to see ourselves for what we are, and help each other become the best versions of us - - to love and cherish each other and the community we are a part of. ZS

I think sometimes it's easier to expect the worst. I started to realize how beautiful humanity is. Just the little things, like smiling at a stranger or helping someone pick up something they

dropped. I love that and get energy from it; it's sacred. People do bad things, too, and I don't want to be ignorant of that. But I need to have a little faith in all of us. IT

It speaks for our species that many try to do the right thing, even if we don't know whether it will have a measurable effect on the world. To me, this shows what it means to be human. Even looking around this room, I can tell that many of you came here because you wanted to support us agers in our journey. You did this out of the kindness of your hearts, and not because you knew it would have some profound effect. VM

I believe nothing happens after you die, which also means I don't think my dad is in a better place, which saddens me. I wish he had eternal happiness and eternal joy, but I can't wrap my head around that. It shifts the focus on your time here on earth from "preparing to get into heaven" to more of a "Seize the day" one, emphasizing the importance of finding meaning through human connections. Human connections, both innate and formed throughout your life, provide us with purpose and fulfillment. FB

Set Two: Finding Joy and purpose

For me, the higher power is this sense of connectedness that lives within and among people and the world. This spirit of love and acceptance, put into action through social justice, compassion, and art is central to my belief. I see inspiration in things like beloved community and world peace, which seem and may be impossible. Life isn't fun when you only work in possibilities and things you can see. The joy of my childhood was the infinite possibility for new ideas; the unimaginable number of new games and stories I had yet to learn. MH

Nature's innate constant growth and diversity, its birth of all things alive is extraordinary in a way that nothing else is. It doesn't know what you are going through, or maybe it does -- it's just there, flourishing, waiting, growing. As an artist nature captivates me in a way that nothing else does, there's an impossibility to its beauty, something I'll never be able to replicate in its entirety on paper. Whenever I need to sort out a problem, I turn to nature, to this original teacher, this original creator, and I know an answer will come to me. LC

As we were nearing our first portage of the day, the sun was starting to rise and the golden light shimmered over the lake. It framed a dead tree with one limb right in the middle, and just as we were passing by an eagle landed on the limb, perfectly lit by the morning sun. This is one of my sacred moments. It says that even though bad things may happen, if we go through our life and live it to the fullest, moments like this will pop up for all of us showing us the sacred. WDR

“For all I know “god” could just be sitting back on a couch watching earth like a TV show.” That is exactly what I believe. My understanding of a higher power is something sitting back and watching what is going on here on earth. Like when you make something amazing and you are just so proud of it that you don't want to touch it or mess with it. You just want to appreciate its beauty from afar. NC

If something is important to me like Friendship, I will do everything I can to protect and love that thing because those are the things that are sacred. If you find something sacred do everything you can to protect it. I have learned valuable life lessons. I have learned to respect everyone, it doesn't

matter if you don't like them. I need to find my own way to help create Beloved Community. RR

Set Three: Seize the day, Cherish Life

My life has changed so much. What is sacred to me right now are my memories, Just spending time with family. Just eating all together at the dinner table. I used to hate eating at the table. I thought I'd rather eat some junk food or go in my room and watch YouTube. I hope the days when you guys can eat all together, you all appreciate it. People aren't always there to do that. KK

Spend time with the people you love, you never know when you're going to end up wishing you spent more time together. When you lose someone, it's always going to feel like you didn't spend the time you could. I will live my life by living through everything, actually taking things in, enjoying the good things that come out of this world, understanding how little time we actually get to spend here. NF

Of course people still live on in our memories of them, which is comforting, but **not entirely so**. In my experience, Loss feels like an **inadequate** word. When someone says "I'm sorry for your

loss” It undermines the experience of death, because unlike a phone or a house key it cannot be replaced. The finality of death is probably what I find most difficult about it. But it is also what makes life and all of our experiences so precious and sacred. JM

I have taken time for granted which made me realize that we need to be spending our time wisely. Life is too short for there not to be something more - I do believe there is an afterlife and the purpose of life is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. I can face loss by acknowledging the good things that a person did in their life and trusting in God that death isn't the end of life but a part of it. DB

I am now 14 years and 364 days old and I am living. I wake up every morning to that annoying alarm, snooze it at least twice, eat breakfast and run to the bus. I am getting ready for the next test, fishbowl, presentation, review. I am running to catch up to my friend to rant about whatever happened the day before. I am screaming into my pillow and smiling when I think about my best friend. I am watching tv, scrolling tiktok, gluing magazines onto paper. I am racing in games and looking angrily at my homework. I am putting off laundry to play 8 ball and darts with my friends. I

am annoying my sister and blasting music to drown out everyone around me. I am living. AR

I cannot say how you see yourself in five, 10, 20 years, but I can say what I hope for myself. I see myself in the wild places of the world, acting to preserve what remains of this Earth in what small ways I can. I see myself penning what may or may not be a terrible piece of literature, putting my whole self into it, regardless of the outcome. And I see myself loving that which I hold dear, loving with all my heart, as I have always done and hope I always will do. CL