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“Living a Spiritually-Designed Life” by Rev. Jessica Vaughan Lower

On August 28th, the *New York Times* published an article titled “God is Dead. So Is the Office. These People Want to Save Both.” The article begins like this, “In the beginning there was COVID-19, and the tribe of the white collars rent their garments, for their workdays were a formless void, and all their rituals were gone. New routines came to replace the old, but the routines were scattered, and there was chaos around how best to exit a Zoom meeting, onboard an intern, end a workweek.”

The article centers on groups of divinity school graduates who have entered the corporate space as ritual consultants, sacred designers, and soul-centered advertisers. Their business is “borrowing from religious tradition to bring spiritual richness to corporate America.” According to the article, “At Harvard Divinity School, scholars have been studying the trend away from organized religion for decades. Their consensus is that while attendance at formal services is at a historic low, people are still looking for meaning and spirituality.” So these consultants develop ways to inject spiritual meaning in the mundane matters of work, helping people to process grief when a project fails and then move on from it, or providing a ritual for celebrating a new acquisition or uniting around a team commitment. Put simply, the goal of these consultants is to “transform common, everyday practices—exercise, reading, walking the dog—into sacred rituals.” Said one of the consultants in the article, “Regardless of what you and I might think about it, the fact is that people are showing up in the workplace with these big deficits in themselves when it comes to belonging and connection to the beyond.”

That experience of spiritual isolation could not be worded much better. Do you ever feel like you are showing up into your every day, ordinary life with deficits of belonging and connection? I know that I often do. Many of us live with a feeling that we are intended to be more intimately known than what our work life, home life, or social life will allow.

In the Book of Romans, Paul urges the believers in Rome to “take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering” (Rm 12:1-2, MSG). In Paul’s estimation, there is nothing about our living that is intended to be lived apart from connection with God: not the big things, like when we or our loved one is in a hospital, and not the small things, like folding laundry.

Put another way, Paul is urging those of us who are longing for a greater sense of belonging and connection to the divine to become ‘spiritual designers’ of our own lives in a similar way that ‘ritual consultants’ provide space for meaning in the corporate work space. How can we establish moments of reflection and connection during the ‘everyday, ordinary’ moments of life so as to bring the extraordinary presence of God into the otherwise rushed-through events that make up the majority of our living?