

#1

When thinking of God's Blessings, I remember as a child being taught to ask for Him to bless others, particular family members and those less fortunate than we were. Asking something for yourself was considered very selfish. Ask Santa yes, God no. So, even today I seldom ask for more than health for myself and for the blessing of others.

The four petitions illuminated in this prayer has made me rethink how God prepares for life:

May God bless us with *discomfort, tears, anger, and foolishness* perhaps with the addition of **Love** is all we need perhaps to grapple with life's many snares and tumults. I would like to think that these blessings would be all human kind would need to get through and comprehend our and others imperfections.

If we all could incorporate these blessings into our lives, I think that achieving the Beloved Community would be quite possible.

#2

My greatest blessing is foolishness. Deep down I believe I can make a difference in other people's lives. How else can I understand treating with dignity a member of the Proud Boys suffering with anxiety as he disparaged gays, immigrants, women and people of color? When a young White cop at the end of an assessment warmly shakes my hand and says "we are brothers" then I know this blessing is real. That same foolishness allowed me to join with a diverse group of people to found our non-profit even though I have no experience running a non-profit whose goal is to reach marginalized youth.

I seldom cry but when I do about the readings or discussions in our group, I acknowledge grief and anger. The erasure of the contributions made by Black people. The indignities and injustice suffered make my blood boil. Maybe the tears come because anger in a Black man need to be quenched or dire consequences could result. We only need to look at our prison population to get a glimpse of that. For others it is the death of a career or loss of life as in extrajudicial killings. Our group provides a sacred space to share our discomforts. Together we discover our own blind spots, privilege and racist, sexist ideas. We squirm together as we listen to prophetic voices such as Malcom X, James Baldwin and Tressie McMillan Cotton. My interest in learning more about intersectionality has peaked as I observe the reactions of others and myself to McMillan's truths. May the showers of blessings continue.

#3

1. discontent/discomfort: my privilege of growing up white and not experiencing the prejudice a person of color is confronted with makes me uncomfortable and not worthy of my accomplishments.

2. anger: nothing angers me more than the delusions and cruelty of the MAGA crowd

3. tears (fear): I fear and grieve for the loss of the lofty ideals that this country is supposedly founded on. I fear the demise of democracy. I fear the work of the antichrist.

4. foolishness: I feel like a helpless fool when faced with the state of the world. I feel foolish for enjoying the small pleasures when so much is at stake.

#4

Discomfort: I fear I am a phony; my body and brain can barely tolerate any more discomfort.

Tears: There is so much pain in the world right now, I find myself holding back tears much of the time, but am too sad to let them fall.

Fear: I fear the losses that lie ahead of me, leaving those I love behind me with so much left undone.

#5

Discomfort: Bring it on, let me be willing.

Tears: I cry for grief of the suffering and for joy that we do this healing justice work together.

Fear: I will not do enough.

Foolishness: I feel free and childlike, letting God direct me to do this work.

#6

inhale: my practice is love

exhale: we get free together

inhale: I can look toward the collective

exhale: my path is not solitary

I see it as a call to be blessed by God to be transformed by strong emotions:

1. discontent (discomfort)
2. anger
3. tears (fear)
4. foolishness

Conversations on Race

Compilation of Group's Individual Reflections on The 4 Words (Discomfort, Tears, Fear, Foolishness)

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I feel a great discomfort being a white woman of privilege in a world with so much oppression, injustice, and inequality. (I feel great discontent living in a community that can easily turn away from these realities just because they have the luxury to). Our reading and wrestling has certainly brought up feelings of anger, fear to tears at the enormity of the pain, suffering, loss of dignity felt by so many.

I feel blessed and grateful to do this work in community- to learn, to be challenged, breathe, and grow together. I aspire to be blessed with some godly foolishness!