

Practicing Belovedness



What are spiritual affirmations?

As Christians, we are used to hearing the truth of the gospel spoken to us. It is often spoken over us that the Lord loves us, that we are his people, and his beloved creation. And yet, do we know this deep in our hearts? Many of us, especially our students, struggle to feel like a child of God, for who are we that God should care for us (Psalm 8:4)? Moving this truth from the head to the heart requires practice.

This resource will provide a handful of affirmations that we can speak over ourselves and others. Even though it seems simple, stating the truth of God's love for us can be profound! Research suggests that affirmations can have a lasting impact: resiliency to stress increases, we become more adaptive, and we achieve more (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). When we speak and own these truths, they become not just something we have been told; they become something known in our hearts. According to Henri Nouwen: "When we claim and constantly reclaim the truth of being the chosen ones, we soon discover within ourselves a deep desire to reveal to others their own chosenness....

Once we deeply trust that we ourselves are precious in God's eyes, we are able to recognize the preciousness of others and their unique place in God's heart."

Putting it into Practice

While there are many ways to practice spiritual affirmations, declaring these truths about ourselves with and to others can be particularly impactful. The following guide is a communal activity that students can continue to practice individually in the future. First, have your group stand in a large open space. When ready, encourage everyone to walk through the space naturally but without speaking. The point of this is to practice mindfully seeing and encountering each other. Many may smile or high-five as they pass - this isn't necessary, but it also won't detract from the experience. This behavior will pass as they become more comfortable. Encourage everyone to truly see each person they pass, making eye contact for a few seconds and moving on. Here, we serve as a witness to the other person. When you think the group is ready to move forward, continue these actions with one of the provided example affirmations.

Now, students will stop and speak with each person instead of passing by. First, have students take turns speaking the affirmation over their partner ("You can stand..."). Once they have both spoken, they continue walking to a new partner. Continue this until you feel that the group is ready to move on. Next, have them personally own the affirmation ("I can stand..."), each telling their partner this truth, then moving to new people. One final variation of this practice is for students to choose their own affirmation from the list and share it in the same way as before. This can help students identify what they want to focus on in their relationship with God and see each other more clearly.

Affirmation Examples

I can stand here and know that I am seen and known by the creator.

I can stand here and know that I belong and I am a part of God's family.

I can stand here and know that I have nothing to prove. I can stand here and know that I am the beloved.

I can stand here and know that at all times that I am good and I am worthy.