

Bathing In Green

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The Japanese have coined a term—*shinrin-yoku*—which means forest bathing. People walk through a forest, soaking up all that the forest has to offer, and they feel relaxed, rejuvenated, and restored. Some think this is just a bunch of bologna, with no scientific evidence for the benefit of forest-bathing. But I totally get it.

In Austin, I pick cycling routes that take me through the color green, like neighborhoods with green lawns and big leafy trees, and trails through the woods. I call riding through these areas bathing in green. My wife, Robin, knows exactly what I mean because she experiences it too. We're both highly sensitive to the color green outdoors. It restores us, deep inside. It feels good, uplifting.

I'm also highly sensitive to the color blue in the sky. Here in Austin, where it's often hazy, the sky is light blue, not dark blue. But in northern New Mexico, where the air is dry and clear, especially in the morning, especially in the mountains, the sky is dark blue. A deep, striking, clarifying blue.

I recently spent several days in New Mexico hiking in the mountains through lush green forests under a dark blue sky. Imagine how it felt, submerging myself into a prolonged bath of green and blue, experiencing with striking clarity a deep restoration of my soul. It felt *so* good.

I'm back in Austin, once again seeking out cycling routes where I get little stretches of green every now and then under a hazy blue sky. It's more of a quick splash of green than the long soaking I recently took. But each splash feels good, it restores my soul just a bit. And even a hazy blue sky brings a bit of clarity to my life.

So every chance I get, I look for a splash of green and a patch of hazy blue, because that's how God restores my soul and gives me clarity, with outdoor green and sky blue.

I think of the line from the 23rd Psalm: in green pastures...you restore my soul.

How does God restore your soul and bring clarity to your life?

I invite you to be present to, to be aware of, the ways God restores your soul, and the ways God brings clarity to your life.

It's so important for us to know these ways.

Name them to yourself. Say to yourself, this is how God restores my soul.... This is how God gives me clarity....

And every chance you get, present yourself to God in those places, or in those ways, that you most readily experience God's life-renewing presence.

Every chance you get.

In doing so, may God bathe you in God's presence, and may God renew your life.