

A Morning of Listening

August 9, 2014

Getting Started

For some this time is a welcomed friend. What a gift to have over 2 hours to just be with and listen to Jesus. For others, this feels a bit intimidating. If it's a welcome friend, dive in! If it feels a bit scary to have this much time, don't panic – you can use these pages to guide your time.

[Note: At 11:30 AM we will meet at the Under the Oaks Theater.]

Focusing in Prayer [adapted from *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, p. 209]

1. Settle in to a comfortable position.

Take a moment to release all of your distractions and worries to God.

Today I am anxious and worried about . . .

2. **Intentionally place yourself in the presence of God**, in the center of his love. Let these verses fill your mind and heart with the reality of who God is in this moment. Circle the words that seem to jump from the page to your heart.

Psalm 29

Honor the Lord, you heavenly beings; honor the Lord for his glory and strength.

Honor the Lord for the glory of his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.

The voice of the Lord echoes above the sea. The God of glory thunders.

The Lord thunders over the mighty sea.

The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic.

The voice of the Lord splits the mighty cedars; the Lord shatters the cedars of Lebanon.

He makes Lebanon's mountains skip like a calf; he makes Mount Hermon leap like a young wild ox.

The voice of the Lord strikes with bolts of lightning.

The voice of the Lord makes the barren wilderness quake; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.

The voice of the Lord twists mighty oaks and strips the forests bare.

In his Temple everyone shouts, "Glory!"

The Lord rules over the floodwaters. The Lord reigns as king forever.

The Lord gives his people strength. The Lord blesses them with peace.

Psalm 27:4-5, 13-14

*One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.*

*For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.*

. . . I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

John 10:7-18

Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

3. Choose a simple word, phrase or verse from these Scriptures that expresses your desire for God right now (e.g. Shepherd, glory, strength, etc.). Let this word become the initial focus of your attention.

My word or phrase:

Why this word/phrase?

4. Take time to become quiet. It is not unusual for the first minutes to be filled with many noisy thoughts. Don't worry about them or pay attention to them. Let them go. Gently return your attention to the center of God's presence and love by repeating your word or phrase. When your thoughts wander, let them drop to the bottom of your mind. Don't go after them. Gently return to the presence of Christ by repeating your word. Let the word draw your attention back to Jesus. *Be with Jesus. Listen. Be still.* When distractions persist, let one of the following images help you return to Jesus.

- Imagine that God's river of life runs through you. Deep down, the river is calm and slow, but on the surface there is rushing and debris. Imagine your distracting thoughts are part of the debris floating in the current. Don't try to capture these thoughts; release them and let the river of God's life carry them away. Anytime you are distracted, let the distractions go with the river. Gently return to the presence of Christ with your prayer word.
- Imagine that you are visiting a friend who lives on a busy city street. Because it is a warm day, the windows are open and all the noise and bustle of life float into the room through the window. At times you are conscious of sirens or people talking or children laughing, but your attention is devoted to your friend, and you do not let your mind follow the sounds outside. As you meet with Jesus, acknowledge the noisy distractions that pull at your attention, but continually return to the moment with Jesus through your prayer word.

5. Rest in the center of God's love. Trust that the Holy Spirit who abides in you to connect you to God.

6. Don't hurry your prayer. Breathe in the presence of Christ. Offer yourself to God for the tasks awaiting you (e.g., "I'm yours," or "Remain with me"). Listen for his whisper.

"In prayer we seek God. We do not seek peace, quiet, tranquility, enlightenment; we do not seek anything for ourselves. We seek to give ourselves . . . to God. He is the all of our prayers."

M. Basil Pennington

Acts 17:24-29

[From The Message]

"The God who made the world and everything in it, this Master of sky and land, doesn't live in custom-made shrines or need the human race to run errands for him, as if he couldn't take care of himself. He makes the creatures; the creatures don't make him. Starting from scratch, he made the entire human race and made the earth hospitable, with plenty of time and space for living so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us. He's not remote; he's near. We live and move in him, can't get away from him!

One of your poets said it well: 'We're the God-created.'

Psalm 62:1, 5

*Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him . . .
Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.*

Psalm 91:1-3

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust."*

Record your prayers and reflections here.

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