




We hope that you find this resource helpful.

If you would like to join us for one of our future Listening Mornings,
the dates and sign up are on our website.

www.cachurch.com/listening

 Christian Assembly Women www.cachurch.com/women

Welcome! We're so glad you're here.

"Seek Me as a vital necessity
- not a luxury –
and you will find Me;
search for Me with all your heart."

-Dear Jesus by Sarah Young

This morning, we are setting aside time in our busy lives to cease being busy and to simply be with God. We are creating the space to connect with God and to hear what he might want to speak to us. It can be a challenge to set aside two hours of silence and listening, but we encourage you to be open to whatever God might have for you in this time.

We have provided some helpful prayers, scriptures and questions on the following pages to guide your time. This is simply a guide, so feel free to add or subtract to it as you feel led. There is no need to rush – take as much or as little time as you need. The goal is not to “get through” all these exercises but simply to use this guide as a way of connecting with and hearing from God.

As you sit with God, if you find that distractions occur or your mind wanders, that's okay. Every time a distraction or random thought comes to mind, just take a moment to give that thought to God and continue sitting with him. For instance, “God, I give you this thought” or “God, I give you this distraction.”

get started...

:::: Turn off your cell phone and place it somewhere where it won't distract you.

:::: Spend five minutes in **SILENCE**. Close your eyes, take whatever posture is comfortable and sit in silence. As distractions come to mind, just give them to God.

:::: **READ** the following verses three times, pausing for a minute between each reading. Read slowly and pay attention to anything God might be stirring or speaking to you through his Word.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

After reading the verse three times, sit in silence and ask God what he might want to say to you through this verse. If you don't sense anything, that's ok. Make note of anything that comes to mind or any words or phrases that stood out to you from the verse.

:::: **REFLECT** on this question: Where do you feel weary or burdened right now? Write down whatever comes to mind below.

:::: Take some time to **PRAY**. In its most basic form, prayer is simply a conversation with God. As you pray, think of it as you would a conversation with a friend. You are simply talking with God and listening to God.

Begin by placing your hands in front of you – *palms face down* – as a symbol of surrender to God. With your palms face down, talk to God about whatever areas of weariness or burden came to mind earlier. For instance, maybe there is something you're nervous about or maybe there is something happening at work or in a relationship that is weighing on you. Talk to God about these things.

Then, turn your hands over – *palms face up* – as a symbol of openness to receiving from God. With your palms face up, ask God for whatever you need right now. Maybe you need God to meet you in a specific way this morning. Maybe you need God to give you hope, joy or peace. Talk to God about these things and ask him for whatever you need.

:::: Read this verse again slowly.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

:::: Spend a few minutes in **SILENCE**. Just rest, relax and breathe.

:::: **READ** Psalm 23. Read it slowly 2-3 times and invite God to speak to you through his Word.
[Psalm 23 is printed on the next page for you.]

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.

:::: **READ** the first verses of Psalm 23 again:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

he refreshes my soul.

The Lord is our shepherd and we are his sheep. The Psalm says that God will make us, his sheep, to lie down in green pastures, but what's interesting is that it's almost impossible to make a sheep lie down. In order for a sheep to lie down in green pastures, four requirements must be met:

1. Sheep must be free from all fear.
2. Sheep must be free from friction with other sheep.
3. Sheep must be free from flies or parasites.
4. Sheep must be free from hunger.

READ those four requirements again, focusing on the things that sheep must be free from in order to lie down in green pasture. They must be free from fear, free from friction with other sheep, free from flies or parasites, and free from hunger. What if we as God's sheep need to gain freedom from these same things in order to lie down in green pasture – to rest, to be content, to experience peace?

4. What are you hungry for right now in life? [*sheep must be free from hunger*]

::::: **PRAY** and talk to God about the things you just reflected on – the things that might keep you from lying down in green pastures. Ask God to meet you in your fears, your friction with others, whatever is bugging you and any ways that you're hungry right now. Consider journaling your prayer on the page below.

::::: Spend whatever time you have remaining in **PRAYER**. If you're not sure how to pray or what to pray about, consider what Richard Foster says below about what he calls "simple prayer". Remember, praying in its most basic form is simply a conversation with God.

"In Simple Prayer we bring ourselves before God just as we are, warts and all. Like children before a loving father, we open our hearts and make our requests....In a very real sense we are the focus of Simple Prayer. Our needs, our wants, our concerns dominate our prayer experience...."

In the most natural and simple way possible we learn to pray our experiences by taking up the ordinary events of everyday life and giving them to God. Perhaps we have a crushing failure that gives us more than one sleepless night. Well, we pace the floor with God, telling him of our hurt and our pain and our disappointment. 'Why me?' we cry out, 'why me?' for frustration and tears and anger are also the language of Simple Prayer. We invite God to walk with us as we grieve the loss of our dream....We should feel perfectly free to complain to God, or argue with God, or yell at God...."

And so I urge you: carry on an ongoing conversation with God about the daily stuff of life....For now, do not worry about 'proper' praying, just talk to God. Share your hurts, share your sorrows, share your joys – freely and openly. God listens in compassion and love....He delights in our presence. When we do this, we will discover something of inestimable value. We will discover that by praying we learn to pray."

Richard Foster, Prayer (pg 9, 11-13)

::::: On the next two pages, we have included an **EXERCISE** you can consider doing this morning, if time permits, or at a later time. Since it's January and the beginning of a new year, it can be helpful to spend some time reflecting on the past year and looking ahead at the new year. This exercise is designed to help you reflect on how God was at work in your life last year and what God might be inviting you to in the new year. Enjoy!

The New Year: Remembrance & Anticipation

remember...

What did God do in your life in the last year? What blessings did the year hold?

anticipate...

Pray and ask God for a word or a phrase to characterize your life in the coming year. Pray, "God, what are you inviting me to in this new year?" Write whatever word(s) or phrase(s) comes to mind below.

Who do you want to be at the end of 2013?

What is one thing you want to see happen in your relationship with God this year? And what is one step you can take to make that happen?