

Daily Spiritual Practices: Sept 24

We want to encourage folks to lean into the resources available through the Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day Devotional. For the next few weeks this resource will be our daily spiritual practice notification.

Monday morning/midday

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [Mark 11:15-17](#)

Devotional

Jesus' intense anger and overturning of the tables in the temple courts ought to make us gasp. He knows that if we don't get to God, invaluable treasures will be lost or obscured. We lose the space where we experience God's unfailing love and amazing forgiveness. We lose an eternal perspective on what is important and what is not. We lose compassion. We gain the world but lose our souls (Mark 8:36 - 37).

Be Free for God

I have a need
of such clearance
as the Savior effected in the temple of Jerusalem
a riddance of clutter
of what is secondary
that blocks the way
to the all-important central emptiness
which is filled
with the presence of God alone.
-Jean Danielou

Question to Consider

How would you describe "what is secondary" in your life, the thing that might be "blocking the way" to experiencing God?

Prayer

Lord, help me to see how much I lose when I lose you. My perspective on my life and all of life gets distorted when I don't make space for you, obscuring your love for me. Your love is better than life, and truly I long for more tastes of that love. In Jesus name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Monday midday/evening

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [1 Samuel 15:22 - 23](#)

Devotional

Saul, the first king of Israel, did not know much about silence or listening to God. Like David, he was a gifted, anointed, successful military/political leader. Yet unlike David, we never see him seeking to be with God. In this passage, Samuel the prophet reprimands Saul for doing many religious acts (i.e., offering burnt offerings and sacrifices) but not quieting himself enough to listen, or "to heed" God (v. 22).

We all must take the time to be silent and to contemplate, especially those who live in big cities like London and New York, where everything moves so fast.... I always begin my prayer in silence, for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is the friend of silence - we need to listen to God because it's not what we say but what He says to us and through us that matters. Prayer feeds the soul - as blood is to the body, prayer is to the soul - and it brings you closer to God. It also gives you a clean and pure heart. A clean heart can see God, can speak to God, and can see the love of God in others. - Mother Teresa

Question to Consider

How could you make more room in your life for silence in order to listen to God?

Prayer

Unclutter my heart, O God, until I am quiet enough to hear you speak out of the silence. Help me in these few moments to stop, to listen, to wait, to be still, and to allow your presence to envelop me.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with silence (2minutes)

Tuesday morning/midday

Scripture Reading: [Jonah 1:1-4](#)

Devotional

Jonah is an example of a prophet with a case of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. He hears and serves God but refuses to listen to God's call to love and show mercy to Nineveh, a world power of that day known for its violent, barbaric behavior. Jonah flees 2,400 miles in the opposite direction, to Tarshish, in present-day Spain.

And why Tarshish? For one thing, it is a lot more exciting than Nineveh. Nineveh was an ancient site with layer after layer of ruined and unhappy history. Going to Nineveh to preach was not a coveted assignment for a Hebrew prophet with good references. But Tarshish was something else. Tarshish was exotic. Tarshish was an adventure. Tarshish in the biblical references was a "far off and sometimes idealized port." It is reported in 1 Kings 10:22 that Solomon's fleet of Tarshish fetched gold, silver, ivory, monkeys and peacocks.... In Tarshish we can have a religious career without having to deal with God. -Eugene Peterson?

As Jonah runs, however, God sends a great storm. Jonah loses control of his life and destiny. He is thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish. It is from the belly of the fish that Jonah begins to wrestle with God in prayer.

Question to Consider

What internal or external storm might God be sending into your life as a sign that something is not right spiritually?

Prayer

Lord, may your will, not my will, be done in my life. You know how easy it is to call myself a Christian but then become busy, forgetting about your will and desires. Forgive me for this sin. Help me listen to you, and grant me the courage to faithfully surrender to you. In Jesus name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Tuesday midday/evening

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [1 John 2:15 - 17](#)

Devotional

At the end of the third century in the deserts of Egypt, an extraordinary phenomenon occurred. Christian men and women began to flee the cities and villages to see God in the desert. They discerned how easy it was to lose one's soul in the entanglements and manipulations found in society, so they pursued God in a radical way by moving to the desert. They became known as the "Desert Fathers."

Society ... was regarded by them as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life..... These were men who believed that to let oneself drift along, passively accepting the tenets and values of what they knew as society, was purely and simply a disaster... They knew they were helpless to do any good for others as long as they floundered about in the wreckage. But once they got a foothold on solid ground, things were different. Then they had not only the power but even the obligation to pull the whole world to safety after them. -Thomas Merton

Question to Consider

How do you hear the words of the apostle John today: "Do not love the world or anything in the world" (1 John 2:15)?

Prayer

Lord, in order to be with you, I need you to show me how to "re-ate a desert" in the midst of my full, active life. Cleanse me from the pressures, illusions, and pretenses that confront me today so that my life may serve as a gift to those around me.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Wednesday morning/midday

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [Genesis 32:22 - 26, 30](#)

Devotional

Jacob's name can mean "cheat" or "grabber, and he lived up to his name. He was manipulative, deceptive, and aggressive - not someone you'd likely nominate for a leadership position in your church. Jacob was a seriously flawed person growing up in a dysfunctional family. He seemed to be either getting into trouble, just getting out of it, or about to make some more?

Jacob's story is so universal because it is so personal. Throughout his life, Jacob was stubborn and unwilling to trust anyone - even God. It was at the Jabbok brook that Jacob was finally broken by God and radically transformed. He was given a new name and a new free-do to live as God originally intended. This came, however, at the price of a permanent limp that rendered him helpless and desperate to cling to God. And it is out of this weak place of dependence that Jacob became a nation (Israel) that would bless the world.

In the same way, God sometimes wounds us in our journey with him in order to move us out of an unhealthy, "tip of the iceberg" spirituality to one that truly transforms us from the inside out. When these wounds come, we can deny them, cover them, get angry with God, blame others, or like Jacob we can cling desperately to God.

Question to Consider

In what way(s) has God put your life or plans "out of joint" so that you might depend on him?

Prayer

Father, I relate to Jacob in striving, manipulating, scheming, denying, and spinning half truths to those around me in order to get my way. At times, I too find myself serving you in order to get something from you. Lord, I invite you to teach me to live in dependence on you. Help me to rest and be still in your love alone.

In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Wednesday midday/evening

Silence and stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [Matthew 16:21-23](#)

Devotional

The apostle Peter had a passionate heart for Jesus, but he was also rash, proud, immature, and inconsistent. His impulsiveness and stubbornness are evident throughout the gospels.

Yet Jesus patiently led Peter to a crucifixion of his self-will, in order that he might experience genuine resurrection life and power.

When I am still, compulsion (the busyness that Hilary of Tours called "a blasphemous anxiety to do God's work for him") gives way to compunction (being pricked or punctured). That is, God can break through the many layers with which I protect myself, so that I can hear his Word and be poised to listen...In perpetual motion I can mistake the flow of my adrenaline for the moving of the Holy Spirit; I can live in the illusion that I am ultimately in control of my destiny and my daily affairs...French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal observed that most of our human problems come because we don't know how to sit still in our room for an hour.

- Leighton Ford

Question to Consider

What might be one way your busyness blocks you from listening and communing intimately with the living God?

Prayer

Lord, forgive me for running my life without you today. I offer my anxieties to you now - as best I can. Help me to be still, to surrender to your will and to rest in your loving arms. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Thursday morning/midday

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [Luke 10:38 - 42](#)

Devotional

Mary and Martha represent two approaches to the Christian life.

Martha is actively serving Jesus, but she is also missing Jesus.

She is busy in the "doing" of life. Her life is pressured and filled with distractions. Her duties have become disconnected from her love for Jesus. Martha's problems, however, go beyond

her busyness. I suspect that if Martha were to sit at the feet of Jesus, she would still be distracted by everything on her mind. Her inner person is touchy, irritable, and anxious. Mary, on the other hand, is sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. She is "being" with Jesus, enjoying intimacy with him, loving him, and taking pleasure in his presence. Her life has one center of gravity - Jesus. I suspect that if Mary were to help with the many household chores, she would not be worried or upset. Why? Her inner person has slowed down enough to focus on Jesus and to center her life on him. Our goal is to love God with our whole being, to be consistently conscious of God through our daily life - whether we are stopped like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, or active like Martha, taking care of the tasks of life.

Question to Consider

What things are worrying or upsetting you today?

Prayer

Help me, O Lord, to be still and wait patiently for you (Psalm 37:7). I offer to you each of my anxieties and worries this day. Teach me to be prayerfully attentive and to rest in you as I enter into the many activities of this day. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Thursday midday/evening

Silence and stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [Psalm 62:5-8](#)

Devotional

David, a man after God's own heart, beautifully models the seamless integration of a full emotional life with a profound contemplative life with God. He trusts in the Lord, pouring out his struggles, fears, and anguish over the lies being said about him. In *The Cry of the Soul*, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman summarize why awareness of our feelings is so important to our relationship with God:

Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality; listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God.... Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice.... However, we often turn a deaf ear - through emotional denial, distortion, or disengagement. We strain out anything disturbing in order to gain tenuous control of our inner world. We are frightened and ashamed of what leaks into our consciousness. In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.

Question to Consider

What are you angry about today? Sad about? Afraid of? Pour out your response before God, trusting in him as David did.

Prayer

Lord, like David I often feel like a leaning wall, a tottering fence that is about to be knocked down! So many forces and circumstances seem to be coming against me. Help me, Lord, to find rest in you and to take shelter in you as my fortress. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Friday morning/midday

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [John 7:2-8](#)

Devotional

Jesus moved slowly, not striving or rushing. He patiently waited through his adolescent and young adult years to reveal himself as the Messiah. Even then, he did not rush to be recognized. He waited patiently for his Father's timing during his short ministry.

Why is it then that we hate "slow" when God appears to delight in it? Eugene Peterson offers us at least two reasons:

I am busy because I am vain. I want to appear important. Significant. What better way than to be busy? The incredible hours, the crowded schedule, and the heavy demands of my time are proof to myself - and to all who will notice - that I am important. If I go into a doctor's office and find there's no one waiting, and I see through a half-open door the doctor reading a book, I wonder if he's any good...

Such experiences affect me. I live in a society in which crowded schedules and harassed conditions are evidence of importance, so I develop a crowded schedule and harassed conditions. When others notice, they acknowledge my significance, and my vanity is fed.

I am busy because I am lazy. I indolently let others decide what I will do instead of resolutely deciding myself. It was a favorite theme of C. S. Lewis that only lazy people work hard.

By lazily abdicating the essential work of deciding and directing, establishing values and setting goals, other people do it for us.

Question to Consider

What is one step you can take today to slow down and live more attentively to the voice of Jesus?

Prayer

Lord, grant me the grace to do one thing at a time today, without rushing or hurrying. Help me to savor the sacred in all I do, be it large or small. By the Holy Spirit within me, empower me to pause today as I move from one activity to the next. In Jesus name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

Friday midday/evening

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: [2 Corinthians 12:7 - 10](#)

Devotional

The Bible does not spin the flaws and weaknesses of its heroes. Abraham lied. Hosea's wife was a prostitute. Peter rebuked God! Noah got drunk. Jonah was a racist. Jacob lied. John Mark deserted Paul. Elijah burned out. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal. Thomas doubted. Moses had a temper. Timothy had ulcers. Even David, one of God's beloved friends, committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. Yet all these people teach us the same mes-sage: that every human being on earth, regardless of their gifts and strengths, is weak, vulnerable, and dependent on God and others. The pressure to present an image of ourselves as strong and spiritually "together" hovers over most of us. We feel guilty for not measuring up, for not making the grade. We forget that all of us are human and frail. The apostle Paul struggled with God not answering his prayers and removing his "horn in the flesh." Nevertheless, he thanked God for his brokenness, knowing that without it, he would have been an arrogant, "conceited" apostle. He learned, as we all must, that Christ's power is made perfect only when we are weak.

Question to Consider

How might brokenness or weakness in your life today present an opportunity for God's power to be demonstrated?

Prayer

Father, the notion of admitting to myself and to others my weaknesses and failures is very difficult. Lord, I am weak. I am dependent on you. You are God, and I am not. Help me to embrace your work in me. And may I be able to say, like Paul, "when I am weak (broken), then I am strong." In Jesus' name, Amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)