

Saturday: Read Psalm 69:13-18

Today we do a guided *lectio divina*. Below is an outline to this ancient practice. May the Lord bless your reading as you seek to hear God's voice today!

Step 1: Find a comfortable place, take a few breaths, and open with a short prayer. For example: "Speak now for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9).

Step 2: The Reading—Find Psalm 69:13-18; read the passage. Now read it once again, slowly, savoring each word or phrase. What words or phrases stand out? Underline them. Read again if nothing hits you the second time.

Step 3: Meditation—Take those phrases that stand out; repeat them, Recite them out loud if you wish. Memorize them. As you recite them, what comes to mind? Allow distraction in whether they are memories, desires, noises. Allow them to interact with the words that you have been drawn to in Scripture. What does Scripture reveal to you about them?

Step 4: Oration—Pray to God and give to the Lord what you have discovered during your time of meditation. Allow the phrase provided to be a blessing for you and thank God.

Step 5: Contemplation—Take a couple minutes and imagine being embraced by God. Enjoy quiet rest in the Lord.

Notes

Endnotes

¹ Soren Kierkegaard. Journals. Excerpt adapted from *The Oxford Book of Prayer*, ed by George Appleton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 259.

Growing Our Roots

"40 Days of Prayer"



Week 4: The Other Half of the Conversation—Listening

WEEKLY PRAYER:

ETERNAL FATHER, LET MY FIRST THOUGHT TODAY BE OF YOU, LET MY FIRST IMPULSE BE TO WORSHIP YOU, LET MY FIRST SPEECH BE YOUR NAME, LET MY FIRST ACTION BE TO KNEEL BEFORE YOU IN PRAYER, AMEN.

ADAPTED FROM PRAYER BY JOHN BAILLIE.

Monday Read 1 Kings 19:11-15; Isaiah 6:8

This past Sunday we began to talk about the other half of the conversation—listening in prayer. For many of us, this is one of the most challenging aspects of prayer. This is partly due to the way in which we conceive of prayer as well as the uncomfortable feeling we have sitting in silence and waiting. Soren Kierkegaard, a 19th century philosopher and theologian, wrote in his journal, "the immediate person [or the person who wants to fulfill their natural desires or impulses] thinks and imagines that when he/she prays, the important thing, the thing he/she must concentrate upon, is that God should hear what the person is praying for. Yet in true, eternal sense it is just the reverse: the true relation in prayer is not when God hears what is prayed for, but when the person praying continues to pray until she/he is the one who hears, who hears what God wills. The immediate person, therefore . . . makes demands in his/her prayers, the true person of prayer only attends."¹ It is hard to change our conception of prayer and even practice of prayer to include times of intentional listening. While we can pray boldly and honestly before the Almighty, we must also be willing to listen. This week we will discuss the importance of listening to God in prayer and examine various ways we can listen to God to help relieve our fears and anxieties when it comes to being quiet before the Lord.

****Are you anxious or afraid of listening in prayer? If so why?***

**** What other reasons might people have for not listening in prayer?***

Tuesday: Read John 10:1-42



“What does God’s voice sound like?” This question floats around in our hearts and minds when we start thinking about listening in prayer. Knowing the voice of God is important if our time of listening is to be fruitful. However, many of us doubt whether or not we would actually know God’s voice when we heard it. So, again we pose the same question, “What does God’s voice sound like? Yet, we must not over think what God’s voice sounds like because we *already* know what God’s voice sounds like. To those who believe, we know the voice of the shepherd. In other words, if we know Jesus, we know the voice of the Father. Jesus is the very embodiment of the voice and will of God. Thus, the answer to the question of how we know God’s voice is through the Gospel and Scripture. By understanding the teachings of Jesus and the movement of God throughout the Bible, we encounter Lord. By reading Scripture, we train the ears of our hearts to hear God.

****What do we learn about the relationship of Jesus and the Father in John? What does this mean for hearing God in your daily life?***

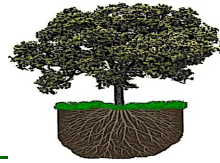
****Can worship and the church tradition help you hear the Lord?***

Wednesday: Read Psalm 27:13-14, 1 Samuel 1:1-20

It is easy to get discouraged when we do not hear God’s voice immediately. Yesterday, we discussed how we can begin to identify the voice of God through Scripture and in the life of Christ. However, even in learning to recognize God’s voice, we still can become easily distracted in prayer. This is due to partly to the fact that we have been trained by our culture to expect quick responses. Ever got frustrated at the drive-thru when you have to wait a *minute* or *two* before your order is taken? Patience is not a virtue in our society! Yet, listening in prayer requires us to slow down. How many of us have drive-thru prayer attitudes? We want an answer and we want it now! No doubt we get an immediate response at times but most of the time we must wait for the Lord. This means we need to be patient and persistent in our listening. Furthermore, we need to be constantly attentive to what God is doing. Being attentive is another way to intentionally listen.

****Ask yourself throughout the day, “Where have I encountered God today? How has this encounter been an answer to prayer?”***

Thursday: Read Psalm 37:1-7, Acts 2:1-12



Sunday, we learned about the “listening post.” Today take the opportunity to practice the listening post. Below you will find the instructions to help guide you in your time of listening. Remember, don’t get frustrated if you don’t hear anything immediately! Be patient and wait for the Lord.

1. *Greet the Lord with a Blessing. “Blessed be the name of my Lord who desires to speak to me and has given me ears to hear him.”*
2. *Breath Prayer: “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”*
3. *(1 Samuel 3:9)*
4. *Begin to listen, listen, and listen some more.*
5. *Let the distractions draw you to God.*
6. *Keep a notebook and pen handy to write down your thoughts and insights gained.*
7. *Record your impressions of God—God said to me. . .*
8. *The most positive aspect of this time was . . .*
9. *Where is God calling me? What action should I take?*
10. *Thank the Lord.*

Friday: Read Psalm 40 & Psalm 73

The next two days, we will explore an ancient practice of listening in the Christian tradition called *lectio divina*. From the Latin, it simply means “divine reading” of Scripture. Today, we will simply learn about this practice and tomorrow you will be guided through the practice. As we discussed on Tuesday, Scripture is the place where we encounter the living God. Through this Scripture reading, the Spirit testifies to our spirit and ministers to us. In *lectio divina*, there are traditionally four parts to this ancient practice. These include: a *reading, meditation, oration, and contemplation*. In each part the hope is to encounter the living Word. The reading is a slow intentional reading of a short Scripture passage. The meditation is a reflecting and memorizing of a short phrase that stands out, constantly repeating it and allowing it to interact with our thoughts, memories, desires, etc. The third piece is the oration or prayer. It is a loving conversation by which we hold up our specific requests, our pains, anxieties, and more that have come to us in our meditation. One allows the words of Scripture to speak to these concerns. Lastly, we contemplate or simply rest in God. There are no words or thoughts, just an opportunity to enjoy God’s embrace.