



For God to Speak

You may want to gather some supplies:

- A Bible
- A journal/pen
- Airpods or other personal listening devices

*Please know it may feel uncomfortable to slow down and stop the pace of life. We want to encourage you to press into the discomfort of slowing to Make Room for God to speak. You may find that your mind becomes easily distracted in the space and stillness. Instead of trying to ignore the things that are interrupting you, let that give you a starting place for prayer and ask the Lord to speak to those things. If you realize your mind has drifted, it may help you redirect by saying- or thinking- "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." Or "I am yours."

The Practice of Solitude*

(This might take 30-60 minutes)

Practice

Choose a place that feels comfortable and safe to you. Settle into a comfortable position in your body and sit quietly for a few moments, breathing deeply, becoming aware of God's presence with you and your desire to be present with God.

Sit quietly and begin to notice what is true about you these days. Don't rush or try to make anything happen. Let your soul venture out and say something to you that perhaps you have had a hard time acknowledging: Is there a particular joy you are celebrating? A loss you are grieving? Are there tears that have been waiting to be shed? A question that is stirring? An emotion that needs expression?

Sit with what comes into your awareness, becoming conscious of God's presence with you in that awareness. Don't try to do anything with what comes to mind. Feel the difference between trying to fix it and just being with it. Feel the difference between trying to fight it and letting God fight for you. What does it mean for you to *be still and let God fight (or work) for you* in this particular area?

Breath Prayer*

(This might take 15-20 minutes)

Practice

Imagine Jesus calling you by name and asking, "_____, what do you want?" Allow your truest answer to this question to come up from your heart, and express this to God.

If it helps, you can begin by writing the following phrase in your journal and then just letting your response flow. "God, what I most want from you right now is . . ."

Work with the words or the phrase that comes until you feel that it captures your desire as truly as possible right now. This word or phrase will become the heart of your breath prayer.

Choose your favorite name or image for God as you are relating to him right now, such as God, Jesus, Father, Creator, Spirit, Breath of Life, Lord, Shepherd- whatever best captures your sense of who God is to you at this point in your relationships.

Now combine your name for God with the expression of your heart's desire. Place it where it is easiest to say in the rhythm of your breathing. If various possibilities come, write them down and eliminate or combine until you have a prayer of about six to eight syllables that flows smoothly when spoken aloud and captures the core of your deep yearning for wholeness and well-being in Christ. Your breath prayer could be a phrase from a biblical prayer or a Scripture passage. Just make sure that it is short enough that it prays easily in the rhythm of your breathing.

Once you have chosen your breath prayer, pray it as you breathe for as long as it provides an opportunity to release the prayer to the Lord. It could be 5-10 minutes, don't rush it.

Scripture Study

(This might take an hour)

Study Matthew 14

- Spend 1 hour reading the passage and:
 - recording what you see about the heart and character of Jesus
 - Recording what you see about the nature of ministry for the disciples
 - Pausing to identify what each person (Jesus, the disciples, the crowd) would have been feeling/struggling with/balancing in each segment
 - Verses 1-12
 - Verses 13-21
 - Verses 22-33
 - Verses 34-36

Lectio Divina

(This might take half an hour)

Using a passage of scripture (perhaps from your Scripture Study):

- **Listen** to a word or phrase that seems to be addressed to you
 - Allow a moment of silence, repeating that word or phrase softly to yourself, pondering it. This is the word that is meant for you. Be content to listen simply and openly, without judging or analyzing.

- **Reflect:** "How is my life touched by this word?"

- Once you have heard the word that is meant for you, read the passage again, and listen for the way this passage connects with your life. Ask:
 - What is it in my life right now that needs to hear this word?
 - Where am I in this scene?
 - What do I hear as I imagine myself in the story or hear these words addressed specifically to me?
 - How do the dynamics of this story connect with my own life experience?
- **Respond:** What is my response to God based on what I have read and encountered? Read the passage one more time, listening for your own deepest and truest response. In silence after the reading, allow your prayer to flow spontaneously from your heart as fully and as truly as you can. At this point you are entering into a personal dialogue with God. Pay attention to any sense that God is inviting you to act or to respond in some way to the word you have heard. You may find it helpful to write your prayers or to journal at this point.

Examine of Conscience*

(This might take 30-60 minutes)

Preparation

- Spend a few moments in silence allowing yourself to be still and know how much God loves you
- Use a favorite scripture, prayer, or other spiritual reading as needed in order to settle into the assurance of God's love in the present moment. And hear God say to you "I have loved you with an everlasting love."

Invitation

- Invite God to go with you in your search for evidence of His presence throughout your day and in your search for self-knowledge

Give Thanks

- Thank God for each part of your day, for His presence, for moments when you sensed a growing freedom from sin, and greater capacity to love God and others
- If there are any unresolved issues pertaining to the events of the last week, express these to God as well and allow yourself to experience gratitude for God's presence with you even in the places that feel dark or confusing.

Confess

- Using Psalm 139:23-24 as your prayer, invite God to bring to mind attitudes, actions, or moments when you fell short of exhibiting the character of Christ. As God brings different things to mind, reflect on what contributed to the situation and what might enable you to respond differently in the future.

Ask Forgiveness

- Express your willingness to take any concrete steps needed to allow Christ's character to be more fully formed in you.
- Be assured of God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9) and His power to continue leading you into the transformation you desire.
- Ask God if there is anything you need to do to make things right relative to the situation you have confessed.

Seek Out Spiritual Friendship (to do after today)

- Seek out a spiritual friend and tell them what you are discovering about yourself, your confession, and your resolve to pursue transformation in this area.

Prayer Walk

(This might take an hour)

As you enter into prayer, things to keep in mind:

At some point, a way ahead starts to become clear. There may even be a couple of options that seem equally good. During this time we can ask ourselves what is the truest and most authentic expression of the Spirit in and through my life at this time.

It is important to recognize in what part of myself is at peace with the idea of this solution or path forward. *Is the ego part of me at peace because I am choosing something that will keep the ego in control? Is it the fearful part of me that is at peace, because I am choosing a path that keeps me safe and secure? Or does this peace reside in the deepest, truest part of me- the part that has the capacity and willingness to be completely given over to God? As we come to achieve self-discipline and yieldedness to the Lord, in proportion as "we die and our lives are lives hidden with Christ in God," discernment then becomes more effective.*

1. Ask God to Reveal

- Do some listening prayer, asking God questions and responding to anything you hear or feel. "Lord, what are YOU doing through our church expansion to CHC? How are you moving, even right now?"

- As you picture the church and consider the area where you live, what is your attention being drawn toward? Pray through the opportunities we may have, and the elements at play that He is highlighting to you. Ask for His thoughts or His heart on those things. Ask him to reveal potential barriers to the advancement of his Kingdom.

- Ask God to reveal how He wants to use you.

2. Ask God to Renew

- Pray for renewal of your own faith. Pray for God to move deeply in your own heart.

- Pray for fresh faith in your community: the lost, those struggling with church hurt, etc

- Pray opposites. Did God reveal any barriers to you when you asked Him to reveal insights? Pray that the opposite would happen for each barrier.

3. Ask God for Revival

- Pray and listen. Ask God to show you what revival would look like in Lancaster county. "Give us a view of what is possible in this place." Pray through the possible.

- Pray that the Body of Christ would be bold, have faith, and be courageous. Pray for Christian groups and other churches.

- Pray for people in power. Pray for local gov't officials, non-profit leaders, church leaders, police, professors... whoever comes to mind.

Journaling

(This might take an hour)

As you talk to Jesus today, **RECORD** what you feel the Lord is:

- burdening your heart for
- sharing about His heart
- addressing/highlighting observations in you
- directing you in tangible "next steps"
- identifying areas where prayer is needed as a form of spiritual warfare
- bringing to mind as a verse, an image, a story in scripture, etc

Discernment*

Questions to support the process of decision-making

(This might take 30-60 minutes)

If you're currently trying to make a decision in a certain area of your life, start by taking a few minutes to silence your heart and ask God to guide you through the process. *James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives*

generously to all without reproach and it will be given to him.....(3:17) "But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere."

Questions to Ask:

- How does this choice fit with the overall direction and calling of God on my life?
- Which choice brings the deepest sense of life, inner peace, and freedom? (John 10:10, 2 Cor 3:17)
- Is there a particular scripture that God is bringing to mind, relative to this choice?
- Is this choice consistent with what I know of the mind and heart of Christ?
- How will this direction nurture the fruit of the Spirit in me?
- What does love require of me?
- Does this choice reflect the value of what is eternal and permanent?
- How does this choice fit with others' observations of who I am and what God is doing in my life?

Perhaps through this process the Lord has made it clear which way you should go, or answered a weighty question. Praise Him!!!! If you still feel like the way ahead is unclear, ask God to bring confirmation in the coming days. As Christians, we are encouraged to "wait on the Lord" (Isaiah 40:31) and trust that He is working within the waiting. Be encouraged in knowing He has heard you and is with you.

**excerpts taken from Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Barton*