

## **Week One**

### **Listening to God in the Silence and Stillness**

It is in Silence and stillness that we may 'hear' God with inner ears. Blocking out all sounds and activity in this fast-paced, noisy world of today is a challenge. But the following steps can help you to relax and focus on that silence within.

You can do this whenever and wherever – even if you only have a few minutes!

First, get into a comfortable position.

Relax, listen to the sounds around you, you might find it helpful to close your eyes, become aware of your breathing, slowly and gently breath in and the out.

Then read a passage of scripture, maybe a favourite Psalm or Psalm One

Remember God is present with you.

A Prayer to conclude or start with:

**In me God, You live and move and have your being.  
In you God, I live and move and have my being.**

**God of Stillness and Creative action help me to find space for quietness today that I  
may discover the inner meaning of silence and hear your still, small voice through  
Christ, in the love of the Spirit.  
Amen.**

Afterwards you might want to write down any thoughts or feelings.

*The material is from 'Prayer Pack' from the Diocese of Rochester and my particular thanks goes to  
Susan Carlsson who edited the publication.*

## **Week Two**

### **Intercessory Prayer**

Intercession means simply being with God with particular people or situations in mind. "Lord, I am here before you, with ...(name)... on my heart." You only need to mention a person or situation with a real intention to hold them before God. It's not about rushing through a list, but naming people or situations in loving care. It doesn't matter how the thoughts or words come out – the more personal and genuine the language, the better.

Use the simple phrase above if you like, or something like: "Circle, Lord, your servant ...(name)... with your healing love..." Talk to God about your particular concern. After naming the person or describing the situation that is troubling you, be silent – whatever feels right to you.

However, it is important to remember that this is only one of many ways of praying, and prolonged moments of repetitive lists of intercessory prayer can sometimes get in the way of a deeper listening place. So a certain balance needs to be found here.

All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Sometimes our way of praying changes as we grow in our relationship with God

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## **Week Three**

### **Listening to music**

Music can enhance and enrich our prayer life. “The person who sings, prays twice.” St Augustine

Listening to a piece of music can be especially helpful when settling ‘into prayer’. It can calm us down and help to rid ourselves of some of the day’s distractions, allowing us to focus more on our relationship with God.

Obviously, not all types of music are conducive to entering into prayer. Instrumental music, sung prayer in the Monastic setting and repetitive chants are good choices. Some may prefer well-known hymns. Being open to experiencing and entering into this different approach to prayer will certainly affect the way we pray and how we experience God.

Choose a piece of meditative, reflective music.

Still your mind – you could use the prayer sheet ‘Listening to God in silence and stillness’ first.

Play the piece of music. When it is finished, sit in silence for a little while.

Then, if you have time, play the same music again.

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This time, listen attentively to the tempo, rhythm, patterns and melodies. What thoughts, feelings come to mind?

Does the music say anything about what God is like?

Is God saying anything to me through this music?

Is there anything or anyone I am moved to pray for?

When the music has finished, be still for a while and then gently bring yourself back to the room.

End your prayer by saying thank you or using words that are familiar, such as the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father) – whichever feels right and comfortable.

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## **Week Four**

### ***Writing or 'journaling'***

Journaling Journaling can, at first, seem a challenging way of praying because we are trying to put into words our encounter with God, who is Holy Mystery. But don't feel daunted by this: it is effectively a conversation between you and God, for God's and your eyes only!

There are many ways of doing it, and there is no set pattern to follow. So you need not worry about 'doing it right'. Your entries may take the form of a poem, a letter or email, but there is no requirement to add a date, although this can be useful for future reference.

Some days you may want to write lots, other times only a few lines or even just random words. You may even want to doodle or sketch, using colour to express your mood, and while it is not a scrapbook as such, you might even want to use photographs or other images you have come across that express something of your inner world, and where you are with God.

Journaling is a process that enables us to express what is going on in our innermost being. Its purpose is not to replay every moment of our day - our diaries record exterior movements, events, and appointments - but rather to discern and record significant inner stirrings: feelings, reactions, intuitions, desires, emotions, thoughts and insights. It can be considered as another way of praying when we use it to explore our relationship with God; going deeper to sift through the gifts of life.

It is important to begin each journaling session in stillness, undistracted, acknowledging God's presence in the activity. Then allow any images, thoughts, feelings, prayers, colours, patterns, people, situations to come into your heart and mind. Try not to analyse or judge, just trust the process. Remember that above all, God asks you to be your honest self, and loves you for being exactly who you are. So do your journaling in a style that is comfortable to you.

To guide you in the process, you may consider:

What were the significant reactions, intuitions, desires, emotions, thoughts, or insights?

What has been life-giving; what has not?

What word, phrase, image, or memory meant the most to me?

Do I feel moved to do something concrete in my life?

Is there anything I am doing or not doing that is getting in the way of my listening to God?

And many more questions besides.

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