

THE ENCOURAGING WORD

Ministries of Encouragement

7 Spiritual Practices to Connect More with God

(Excerpt taken from Klaus Issler, "Wasting Time with God," InterVasity, 2001)

1. **PRESS THE "PAUSE BUTTON ON LIFE."**
Throughout our day, where-ever we are, take a 30 second break to have a word with our Sponsor- The God who is always near. Personalize God's omnipresence by inviting God into our day (Psalm 139:23-24)- especially during the blocks of time we normally tend to be "alone" in our own thoughts.
2. **LOOK AT NATURE** and see the handiwork of God, his invisible attributes (Romans 1:20). Notice the colors, sounds, smells, textures, and the tastes of life designed for us. God is the Artist-Engineer-Creator who makes things beautiful as an added touch.
3. **BECOME AWARE** of the good "COINCIDENCES" in our day-for all good gives come from God (James 1:17). God is more active in our lives than we know! It's a God-thing.
4. **MONITOR OUR HEART**-is it peaceful or not? Share our anxious thoughts and concerns with God. God promises to overwhelm us with His peace (Phil 4:6-7).
5. **MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE**- Pick a verse/short passage to ponder (Psalm 1:2-3). No speed reading, no agenda. Mull it over, say it slowly; wait and listen to God to touch our soul. Ask God for the significance of the passage for our own life (Hebrews 4:12-13).
6. **JOURNAL TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S MOVEMENT IN OUR DAY**- jot down your thoughts, feelings, and actions of your day. What moved you closer to God? (Psalm 55, Psalm 84)
7. **MEET MONTHLY WITH A SPIRITUAL MENTOR**-someone who walks closely with God.



Here, Master, in this Quiet Place

Here, Master, in this quiet place,
where anyone may kneel,
I also come to ask for grace,
believing you can heal.

If pain of body, stress of mind,
destroys my inward peace,
in prayer for other
may I find the secret release.

If self upon its sickness feeds
and turns my life to gall,
let me not brood upon my needs,
but simply tell you all.

You never said "You ask too much"
to any troubled soul.
I long to feel your healing touch-
will you not make me whole?

But if the thing I most desire
is not your way for me,
may faith, when tested in the fire,
prove its integrity.

Of all my prayers,
may this be chief: Till faith is fully grown,
Lord, disbelieve my unbelief,
and claim me as your own.

Fred Pratt Green, 1974

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Inward Journey: Moving from Restlessness to Solitude

Spirituality is attention to the life of the Spirit in us; it is standing before the Lord with an open heart and open mind. Opening our hearts to God requires that we find a place of solitude where silence, prayer and reading God's Word can fuel our inner peace. Solitude is not just being alone but being alone with God.

Time given to inner renewal is never wasted time in fact it is the fuel for the journey, it is the discipline that will shape the very fabric of our being. Inner peace can be found when we meet with God who embraces us so that our burdens become light on our journey ahead. In solitude we encounter not only God but also our true self," (Henri Nouwen, Making All things New and Clowning in Rome, Dare to Journey Devotional Reflection 3).

I am reminded of the actions of the desert fathers who lived in the Egyptian desert during the fourth and fifth centuries seeking a life in the Spirit by fleeing, being silent, and praying, (Henri Nouwen, Way of the Heart).

Setting apart time daily to spend in solitude with God by meditating on His Word, learning to be silent, and praying can help renew your spiritual muscles. It can help change our view, thoughts, and approach in dealing with daily life situations.

As an athlete trains by focusing on the physical muscles and the body we as believers can train by focusing on our spiritual muscles that can form our thoughts, reactions, and emotions. In solitude our trainer is the Holy Spirit.

Practicing solitude takes practice and can provide a venue for transformation to occur. It is exercising our spiritual muscle to connect to God. In solitude we practice silence, listening, and prayer. We seek to spend time with God in an environment that speaks to our inner spirit. Remember always the Helper we have been given in the Holy Spirit. "When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me," (John 15:26). Have you found your own place of solitude devoid of distractions? Have you made spending time on inner renewal and your relationship with God a priority?

Are you willing to seek a life in the Spirit as the desert fathers did?



"Listen to me,
O my people, ..."
Psalms 81:8

"Hearing Aids" REAP-U-DO

You may wish to jot in the back of your Bible these "hearing aids" to help you get more from the pastor's message. **LISTEN**

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| R everently - | Habakkuk 2:20 |
| E xpectantly - | Psalms 62:5 |
| A ttentively - | Acts 15:12 |
| P rayerfully - | 1 Samuel 3:10 |
| U nderstandingly - | Nehemiah 8:8 |
| D iscerningly - | Acts 17:11 |
| O bediently - | Matthew 7:24-27 |

Roy Robertson

On Listening to God

When the world around me is turbulent and deafening, I will listen to your still, small voice.

When human reasoning seems too sweetly reasonable, I will seek the mind of Christ through the Word of God.

When I am pressed with heavy responsibilities and frayed by the strains of ministry, I will pause that I may be still, so that I may realize again the astonishing fact that you are God, and that my world is still under your control.

Blessed be the God who daily leads us in triumph.

Amen