

Practice 2: Abiding

Overview

As a whole church, throughout the course of this Fall, we are going to make space and intentionally pursue "being with Jesus" - both together and individually. Our first step in this direction was to familiarize ourselves with the practice of "Silence & Solitude". As we continue to build upon the practice of spending time in silence we are going to add small pieces to our time in silence. This week we will be moving from simply "stilling" our hearts to beginning to be with Jesus.

Our goal for today is to build upon last week's practice of "Silence & Solitude", continue to practice together, and make plans for how we will implement it personally this week.

Prayer

After you debrief, take a few moments to pray as an MC and invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together.

Debrief *10 min*

Talk through the following debrief questions:

1. How did last week go? What did you experience in silence and solitude?
2. What was the best part? The hardest part?
3. What barriers did you experience? What would help you better navigate those?

Open to the Bible together *10 min*

Have somebody read John 14:8-10 and another person read John 15:4-11. Talk about the following questions:

1. How do you see the connection between silence and solitude and abiding in Christ?
2. Where do you see the role of abiding in Jesus' ministry?
3. How did the disciples abide in Christ? How can we?

The Explanation & Prompt *5-10 min*

Here's the practice for this evening and the upcoming week. It is going to look very similar to the previous practice:

1. Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable
 - For most people, sitting with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, legs on the floor is a good start.
2. Begin with a “breathing prayer” (this is just a fancy term for ↓)
 - Close your eyes.
 - Take long, deep, slow breaths (if you want, count 4 seconds in, 4 seconds wait, 4 seconds out, repeat).
Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth.
 - Start to pay attention to your breathing. Just “watch” your breath go in and out.
 - Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes, and just focus on your breathing.
 - Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to do’s, and distractions. That’s okay. Don’t judge yourself, feel bad, give up, or worry. When you notice your mind start to wander, just recenter with a quick prayer, like, “*Father, you are here with me.*” and come back to your breathing.
3. Whether we believe or experience it, God is omniscient/present with us. Welcome his love, joy, and peace from the Holy Spirit.
 - The main goal here is to sit in and grow an awareness of the presence of God. Just as Jesus retreated and quieted himself to be with the father, we too want to make space to get quiet and be with Jesus.
4. Close in a prayer of gratitude to the Father (simple version: thank Him that he is near to us)

A few things to note:

1. You can’t “succeed” or “fail” at this practice. All you can do is show up. Be patient. Resist the urge to say, “I’m bad at this” or “This isn’t for me.” Don’t judge yourself, especially if you’re an overachiever type.
2. If sitting still feels like death, you might want to try this while doing a stretching exercise or going on a walk somewhere quiet and distraction free (like a park or short hike).

The Practice 7 min

Dismiss everyone to go find a spot to be silent and “do” the practice. (The leader will set a timer once everyone has found a place). Feel free to take a notebook/pen with you. When the timer is up, return to the group.

Work through these discussion questions 10-15 min

1. How did it go?
2. What was the best part? The hardest part?
3. What barriers do you think you will face in practicing silence at least 5-7 minutes 3 times this week?
4. What is your deepest fear and greatest hope for this coming week's practice?

Close in prayer 5-10 min

Tips for the Coming Week

1. Identify a time/place that works well for you
 - Time: For most people, first thing in the morning works best. You're rested, fresh, and the day is young. For others, a more optimal time slot is when kids are napping in the late morning, or on a lunch break, after work, or before you go to bed. Feel free to experiment until you find the right fit.
 - Place: Find a place that is quiet and as distraction free as possible: A comfortable chair or a park are also a good bet.
 - For most people, sitting with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, legs on the floor is a good start. Others do better lying on their back in a relaxed position.
 - Some of you may prefer to do this exercise while walking or doing something simple with your hands like drawing.
2. Set a modest goal
 - Beginners: It's better to start small and work your way up. We recommend you start with 5-10 minutes, 3-5 days a week.
 - Intermediate: If you already practice silence and solitude a few times a week, consider upping it to every day.

Practice 2 was adapted for use by Redemption Church from Practicingtheway.org