

Practice

SESSION 01: THE QUIET PLACE

Information alone does not produce transformation. To grow, let's put this teaching into practice. Consider how the Spirit wants to transform your life in response to what you've learned.

The exercise for Session 01 is very simple; it's to begin your day with a few minutes of solitude, silence, and stillness.

You may find this exercise works better for you at night before bed, midmorning when your toddler is napping, or on your lunch break; that's great. But for the vast majority of people, we recommend first thing in the morning, when your body is rested, your heart open, and the day is new.

Here's a step-by-step exercise to try.

- 01 Find a quiet place in your home or outside in nature that is as *distraction-free as possible*. Make sure your phone is in another room and settle into a comfortable position.
- 02 Begin to take long, slow breaths from your belly all the way up through your lungs. Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. If you want, count up 5 seconds on the inhale and down 5 seconds on the exhale.
- 03 With each inhale, prayerfully welcome the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit into the deepest place within you. You may want to repeat a simple prayer like "Come Holy Spirit" or "Lord, have mercy on me" or just "Jesus." Something to keep your mind focused and to let this be more than just breathing, but prayer.
 - Your mind *will* seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to-dos, and distractions. That's okay. Don't judge yourself, feel bad, give up, or worry. Distraction doesn't mean you're "bad" at prayer; it means you're *human*. When you notice your mind starting to wander, just come back to your breathing or your prayer word.

- In the beginning, just 1-2 minutes of this type of prayer is a win. Ten minutes is a home run.

04 Now that you are centered in your body and in God, spend a few minutes just resting in God's love for you. Let the Holy Spirit make his presence known to your whole body. Just soak in his love and peace and joy. Let God love you.

- You may want to visualize the love of the Father being poured out in Christ and into the depth of your being by the Holy Spirit.
- Or you may want to listen for God's voice and see what comes to mind.
- Or you may want to worship and express your love to God in your own way.
- But don't try to fill up this time. And don't try to make anything happen or control the experience — just *be* with God.

05 After a few minutes, you may want to continue your time in solitude by praying a psalm or reading a story from the Gospels or a passage from Scripture. Or by praying over your life. Or by journaling to God. Follow your heart.

06 Whenever you're done, close your time with a simple prayer of gratitude to God for his presence, love, and goodness in your life.

Please note: Our strong recommendation is that you do this *every single day* this coming week and, if you can, for a little longer on the Sabbath. If you only get to do it once or twice, that's still great, but there is something about the practice of beginning every day in the quiet with God that is very basic, yet ancient and powerful.

This practice of beginning your day in silent prayer is not for everybody; it may not work best for your personality or stage of life. But so many of the great followers of Jesus throughout history tell us that the way to begin to be with Jesus *all* the time is to set aside our first moments upon waking to intentionally be with him for *some* of the time.

