

A vibrant underwater photograph of a coral reef. The foreground is filled with diverse coral species, including branching corals in shades of red and orange, and large, rounded brain corals in brown and tan. Numerous small, colorful fish are scattered throughout the scene. The background shows the water's surface with sunlight filtering through, creating a shimmering, textured effect. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, greens, and the warm tones of the coral.

Are you Listening?

What do you hear?





Maybe
your
mind
looks
like
this
right
now...



Listening, Rest, Contemplation, Spiritual Exercises, Slowing down, grounding, and peace so that we may hear the voice of God and align our bodies, minds, and souls to Him and His kingdom.

- Technology has been changing our neural pathways and keeping us in a state of partial attention. How can we “act on our devices instead of allowing them to act on us”?
- When our minds are distracted, our bodies are oftentimes not regulated. Which means we are either on the brink of ‘fight, flight or freeze’ or we are in the midst of it.
- What does grounding skills and true rest look like for a Christian?
- How do we learn to listen to God’s voice?

New Testament Scholar Scott Mcknight reports that the word listen appears in the Bible over 1500 times and the most frequently voiced complaint in the Bible is that the people don't listen. (Listening Life, 2015)

“Son of man, you are living among a rebellious people. They have eyes to see **but do not** see and **ears to hear but do not hear**, for they are a rebellious people. Ezekial 12: 2

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³² Then you will **know the truth**, and the truth will **set you free**.”

Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. ⁴³ Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are **unable to hear what I say**. ⁴⁴ You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! ⁴⁶ Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me? ⁴⁷ **Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.**”

Spiritual Exercise #1 Confession

- **Examine your conscience.** Regularly set aside time to reflect on your attitudes, thoughts, and actions. Consider where you have failed to love God and others.
- **Confess your sin specifically.** Honestly and humbly name your sins to God. Rather than speaking in generalities ("I'm a sinner"), be specific about your actions and attitudes
- **Receive forgiveness.** Rest in the promise of forgiveness and express gratitude to Jesus for setting you free.
- **Practice accountability.** Share your struggles with one or more trusted, mature Christian friends. Allow them to pray for you, encourage you, and provide accountability to help you grow in obedience.
- **Seek reconciliation.** If your sin has wronged another person, seek their forgiveness directly. This is a powerful act of reconciliation that can be a blessing to both parties.

Spiritual Exercise #2: Ignatian Meditation

- Introduction: Ignatius method of scripture meditation hinges on using your physical senses to imagine and feel yourself to be in the gospel story.
- Ask for grace: Ignatius directs us to pray for a specific grace related to the theme of that Bible passage.
- Imagine Scripture: We read the scripture twice, using our imagination and senses to see, touch, feel and hear the story.
- First reading: We enter into the visual story in our mind and imagine it. We ask the Holy Spirit to guide us to identify with either a character or a bystander and then we read the story again.
- Second reading: Now we focus on how it feels to be in the role of the character God led us to. Avoid over analyzing and instead allow your senses to lead you to emotions, images or sensations.
- Last: Spend a short time listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you personally and pray about this.

Mark 7: 31-36

- ³¹ Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him. ³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means "Be opened!"). ³⁵ At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. ³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

When are faith feels shaky and we aren't sure about trusting Jesus for our needs..

- Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”
Mark 8: 17-19
- When has Jesus done something Supernatural in your life? Please share this experience with your small group.

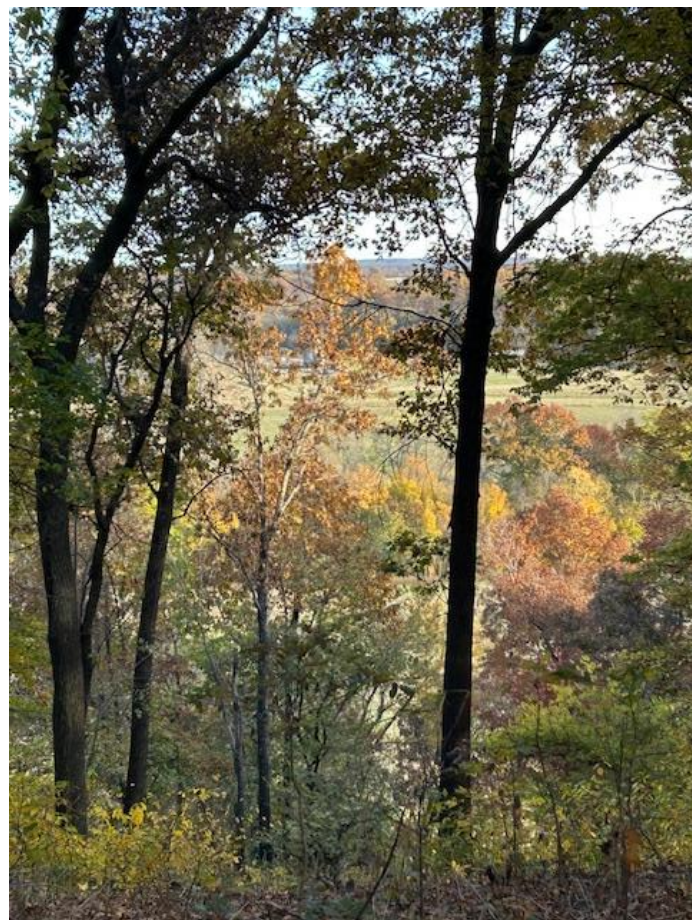
Spiritual Practice #3: Breath Prayers

- Breath prayers are an ancient practice of breathing in and out a phrase of scripture. It is a way of using our bodies in worship, much like raising our hands in worship or kneeling in prayer. It also helps regulate our bodies and can be used as a grounding practice when we are experiencing anxiety.
- “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” Psalm 23:1
- Breathe in... The Lord is my Shepherd
- Breathe out...I shall not want

Times the Holy Spirit speaks to me directly...

- For my protection: Costa Rica
- For my blessing (but also my protection): Argle
- For the protection of the church: Discernment of impure motives of people or situations at the church
- For the protection of others: Prophetic understanding of how to intercede for others and the church
- For deeper understanding of the Supernatural-open your eyes!

Spiritual Exercise #4 Contemplation



Other Spiritual Exercises

- Examen
- Fasting
- Solitude days/retreats
- Retreats
- Lectio Divina
- Scripture Memorization
- Mentorship
- Christian Counseling and/or Spiritual Direction

Small Group Discussion

- Please take some time in your small groups to share an experience that was supernatural in your own life.
- Please take some time to reflect on one of these spiritual exercises that you would like to implement in your life on a more regular basis and share that with your group.