



Week 2: Engaging Your Burden.

1. What's something that bothers you? Not just a pet peeve—something you see as a real injustice or need.
2. Read Neh. 1:4-11. Pastor Dan shared that this time of prayer and fasting was four months long! If you were to take an honest assessment of your LIFE with GOD, how would you rate your Being vs Doing? Why is prioritizing being with God over doing for God important as we begin to engage broken places in our lives and community?
3. Read Nehemiah 2:5-8, 11-16. How can Nehemiah's example of establishing a clear vision and careful planning help us as we start to engage broken places?
4. Why is passion for our burden important? How can it help us invite others? How can you encourage others to believe that God can empower them to do something that matters?
5. When engaging broken places, we're called to prioritize being with God over doing for God, seek clarity, plan carefully, and invite others passionately. How can you do one of those things this week?

Prayer is the place our burdens are transformed into passionate plans.

Father, thank You for the passions You've given each of us. Help us to use these passions to serve You and others. Shape our vision for the work You would have us do and guide us as we plan for the future. Allow others to see our passion, so they might be inspired to join us in engaging our world for YOUR glory. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

This week's Spiritual Practice: Silence¹

God appeared to Elijah after his suicidal depression and flight from Jezebel, He told him to stand and wait for the presence of the Lord to pass by. But God did not appear in ways he had in the past. He was not in the wind (as with Job), an earthquake (as in Mount Sinai and the Ten Commandments), or fire (as in the burning bush with Moses). As we read in 1 Kings 19:12, God finally revealed Himself to Elijah in "a sound of sheer silence." The English translation of God coming "in a still, small voice" does not capture the original Hebrew intent, but what could the translators do?

How do you hear silence? Dallas Willard calls silence and solitude the two most radical disciplines of the Christian life. Similarly, Henri Nouwen wrote that "without solitude it is almost impossible to live a spiritual life." In solitude, we separate ourselves from people and things in order to attend to God. In stillness, we quiet every inner and outer voice to listen for God's "sheer silence."

Silence and solitude are probably the most challenging and least experienced disciplines among Christians today. We live in a world of noise and distractions. And yet, in Psalm 37:7a, Scripture commands us to "be still before the lord and wait patiently for him." It also calls us to "be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10a).

Though it's a struggle, waiting for God in the midst of silence ushers us into His restful presence. For Elijah and for us, the silence after chaos abounds with the presence of God. He spoke to Elijah out of the silence and He also speaks to us.

Practical Guidelines: Beginning this week with 2 minutes once a day.

- settle into a comfortable and quiet place. Take a few deep breaths, allowing yourself to inhale and exhale slowly.
- Begin with a simple prayer, or scripture such as "Here I am Lord," or "Abba Father," or "Jesus." Or reciting Ps. 37:7 or 46:10 (above). This prayer expresses your focus and desire for one thing, to spend time with God and to recognize His presence with you...a reality many of us don't take the time to attend to.
- When distractions come - and they will - entrust them to God's care, say your simple prayer, or scripture again and turn your thoughts back to God.

Give yourself grace, especially at the beginning. This is a counter-cultural practice and it won't be easy! But when you choose to **BE** with God before **DOING** for God, you are choosing to allow Him to take His place at the center of your life. You are letting go of control, your agenda, and your need to **DO**. That's a big deal! Good luck!

¹ adapted from <https://www.emotionallyhealthy.org/practicing-silence/> and Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day: A 40-day Journey with the Daily Office* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 14.