

STILLNESS

By, Elizabeth Muller

Our hope is that this guide will serve as a tool to help you reflect on the past few weeks and find peace in the sudden stillness you may find yourself in. This guide is designed to lead you through a 1.5-2-hour time with God. If you finish early, take time to read Scripture or pray, it's okay to finish early. It's also okay if you don't finish within the 2 hours.

1. *Find a quiet, comfortable place in which you feel safe.*
2. *This time should be free from phone calls, technology, or interruptions.*
3. *The following schedule is designed to create space for an extended time with God. As you spend time in it, give yourself lengthy opportunity to observe, reflect, and process with God. Journaling is highly encouraged. As the Holy Spirit guides your time, pay attention to His direction and be willing to go where He leads.*
4. *Many times, the fruit of retreat doesn't show itself during the retreat, so be encouraged and take heart that your time during retreat is of benefit to you even if this time seems quiet or uneventful.*

SLOWING THE BODY. *(about 30 minutes)*

"But we will not become unhurried on our own. We cannot achieve this alone. We will have to enter a life of training. So, let's look at practices for the hurry-sick. The first practice is one we might call 'slowing.' This involves cultivating patience by deliberately choosing to place ourselves in positions where we simply have to wait." - JOHN ORTBERG

Jesus lived at walking pace, interruptible even in the midst of situational urgencies. To follow someone, we can't be faster than the one who is leading. We first learn the rhythms of Jesus' life before we fully reflect his heart. Take time praying and journaling through these questions.

- Do you feel hurried on a regular basis?
- How has your routine changed in the past few weeks?
- Where do you now allocate most of your time?
- How has the pace of your life altered?
- How would you describe the pace of Jesus' life?
- What practices did Jesus incorporate in his lifestyle to maintain such a pace?
- What might this current season of physical stillness be leading you toward?

"Thus says the LORD: 'Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.'" - JEREMIAH 6:16 (ESV)

Pause. Ground yourself in the moment and feel the weight of your body. Ask God to guide you in adopting a lifestyle characterized by the slowness modeled by Jesus.

SLOWING THE MIND. *(about 30 minutes)*

“The first fruit of love is the musing of the mind upon God. He who is in love, his thoughts are ever upon the object. He who loves God is ravished and transported with the contemplation of God.” – THOMAS WATSON

Stillness presents opportunity for filling but must first be preceded by emptying. Reflection and contemplation, in the presence of God, free the mind of anxieties and introduce peace. Stillness silences the shouts of the world so we can hear the whispers of God. Take time praying and journaling through these questions.

- What types of thoughts naturally fill your mind in times of uncertainty?
- Where do you most often direct your attention?
- How do your thoughts affect your emotions and behaviors?
- How have you seen God’s faithfulness in the past?
- How can you redirect anxious or negative thoughts to focus on God’s promises?
- What might God be wanting to communicate with you in this season?

Pause. Allow God to become central to your thoughts and invite his peace into every part of your mind.

*You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.”
– ISAIAH 26:3 (ESV)*

SLOWING THE HEART. *(about 30 minutes)*

“A carefully cultivated heart will, assisted by the grace of God, foresee, forestall, or transform most of the painful situations before which others stand like helpless children saying ‘Why?’” – DALLAS WILLARD

Hurry invokes repression of past wounds into deep places of the heart while stillness allots space for their emergence, either in gentle hesitation or with unrelenting force. Slowing the heart invites God into previously barricaded areas for a work of deep healing and restoration. Take time praying and journaling through these questions.

- What emotions have arisen in prominence in the last few days?
- Was emotional awareness a part of your upbringing?
- Have you lost anything recently and leaned into mourning its absence?
- Have you gained anything recently and leaned into rejoicing in its blessing?
- How does the posture of your heart impact the quality of your relationships?
- What part of your heart do you notice God waiting to step into?

Pause. Ask God to use this season of stillness for renovation of your heart. Release the burdens you’ve been holding onto into his open arms and trust him with the cultivation of your heart.

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” – EZEKIEL 36:26 (ESV)