



Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day

A 40-DAY JOURNEY *with the* DAILY OFFICE



Peter Scazzero

Previously published as *Daily Office*

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ZONDERVAN

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Acknowledgments



I want to thank Geri, my wife, my best friend, and my favorite companion in “The Journey.” She has spent countless hours prayerfully pondering and experimenting with these Daily Offices in a variety of contexts. Her work crafting thoughtful questions is meant to touch the soul and lead us to a personal experience of God. What a gift!

Thank you.

An Invitation to Loving Union



Most Christians today are struggling spiritually, especially when it comes to spending time with God. You may be one of them. If so, it might help you to know that the struggle is real, and that you are far from alone.

Throughout more than thirty years of being a pastor, I've encountered this struggle in virtually every person and in every corner of the church—from people in our own international congregation in Queens, New York, to Christian leaders in a variety of settings and denominations throughout the world. If you asked me to summarize what I've observed about the spiritual condition of believers today, here is what I'd say. We are ...

- feeling stuck in our spiritual journey with Christ;
- living off of other people's spirituality;
- scattered, fragmented, and uncentered;
- tired—physically, spiritually, and emotionally;
- existing with only a one-inch-deep spirituality;
- praying and communing with God very little;
- busy and not very intentional in pursuing Jesus;
- struggling to stop our “life on the run.”

The bottom line? Too many of us have a relationship with Jesus that is seriously underdeveloped. We talk *to* God, or even perhaps *at* God, but don't actually listen to him very much. And that is

nothing less than a global spiritual crisis—especially when we consider that God intends for his love to reach the world through us!

The outlook may seem bleak. But what if I told you that, while the problem is real and pervasive, it is far from a lost cause? There *is* a way to live a relaxed, unhurried, contented life in Jesus amidst the pressures and difficulties of life. There *is* a way to mature into spiritual adulthood anchored in the love of God. There *is* a way to remain thoughtful when triggered in conversations and listen for God's voice. There *is* a way to surrender to God's love and will consistently—even when it is difficult. There *is* a way to give our lives in service to others without becoming chronically exhausted.

How? The answer lies in intentionally rearranging our days to integrate the Christian practice of being still and silent in God's presence.

AN ANCIENT AND REVOLUTIONARY SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

The purpose of this book is to introduce you to this spiritual discipline that is both ancient and revolutionary. It's called the "Daily Office."¹ The Daily Office provides a structured way of spending time with God each day, but it differs from what we tend to think of as "quiet time" or "devotions." Quiet time and devotions normally take place once a day, usually in the morning, and focus on "getting filled up" for the day or on interceding for the needs of others. The Daily Office takes place at least twice a day, and it is not so much about turning to God to *get* something as it is turning to God to simply *be with* him.

The goal of the Daily Office is to pay attention to God throughout the entire day and in the midst of our activities. This is the great challenge for all of us. The enormous pressure of the world and our

own stubborn self-will make it extraordinarily difficult to sustain any consistent awareness of God's presence. But it is far from impossible.

So why is it called the "Daily Office"? The word *office* comes from the Latin word *opus*, or "work." For the early church, the Daily Office—praying at fixed times throughout the day—was always the first "work of God" to be done. Nothing was to interfere with that priority.

But this practice of fixed-hour prayer is one that actually long predates the early church. Three thousand years ago, King David practiced set times of prayer seven times a day (Psalm 119:164). The prophet Daniel prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10). Devout Jews in Jesus' time prayed at morning, afternoon, and evening. Such set times of prayer were one of the Israelites' great spiritual and cultural treasures, a practical way to keep their lives centered on loving God at all times. Even after the resurrection, Jesus' disciples continued to pray at certain hours of the day (Acts 3:1; 10:2–23).

It was about AD 525 when a monk named Benedict created a formal structure for these prayer times that he anchored in eight Daily Offices (including one for monks in the middle of the night). Prayer was the framework for the day, and everything else in their lives was ordered around it. Benedict wrote: "On hearing the signal for an hour of the divine office, the monk will immediately set aside what he has in hand and go with utmost speed. Indeed, nothing is to be preferred to the Work of God [the Daily Office]."²

All of these people—from the ancient Israelites to first-century disciples and early Christian leaders like Benedict—realized that stopping to be with God, by means of the Daily Office, was the key to creating a continual and easy familiarity with God's presence. And having practiced the Daily Office for over fourteen years, I can affirm it has done that for me. Routinely setting aside small units of

time for morning, midday, and evening prayer infuses the activities of my day with a deep awareness of the sacred—of God. In those moments, I remember that all time is God’s time. There is no division between the sacred and the secular.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day provides a flexible structure for your time with God. My hope is that you will adapt it to the unique needs and demands of this season in your life. God has built each of us differently. What works for one person will not necessarily work for another, and what worked for you at one time in the past may no longer work for you now. Allow grace—not legalism—to be the foundation for your practice.

The book includes material to guide you through a forty-day journey of praying the Daily Office. I’ve collected the days into eight weekly themes, with each theme based on a chapter from *The Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* book and *The Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Course* (which also includes a DVD and workbook) and provide a means to stay deeply connected to Jesus, who reminds us: “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:56). On the last page of the devotional you will find a checklist to keep you on track as you move through the course. Fill it out along the way and, when completed, go to emotionallyhealthy.org to receive your certificate of completion.

There are two Offices per day—one for morning or midday, and the other for midday or evening. You may, for example, do one in the morning and the other at midday, or one at midday and the other in the evening before you go to bed. You choose the length of time for your Offices. The key, however, is to keep your focus on attending to God,

not the number of minutes you spend with God. Pausing to be with God might last anywhere from two to twenty to forty-five minutes. My wife, Geri, and I choose to have longer times with God in the mornings and then shorter ones at midday and in the evenings. It is up to you.

Each Office contains five elements: Silence and Stillness, Scripture, a Devotional Reading, a Question to Consider, and Prayer.

1. *Silence and Stillness.* This is the foundation of a Daily Office. We stop our activity and turn our attention to the Living God. We heed the words of the psalmist to, “Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7), to “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). We choose to enter into awareness of God’s presence and to rest there in his love. That choice alone is no small feat. There are occasions when I pause for my midday prayer and find that I spend the entire time—be it five or twenty minutes—centering my thoughts so I can let go of tensions and distractions and begin resting in the love of God.

Each Office begins and ends with two minutes of silence and stillness. Many religions have some practice of silence, so there is nothing particularly Christian about the silence itself. What makes silence unique for us as followers of Christ is that we are still and silent in the context of our relationship with the living God. In a posture of attentiveness and surrender, we allow him and his will access to the innermost parts of our lives. This is the very core of what it means to be in loving union with him.³

This may be difficult for you, especially at first. Our internal and external worlds are filled with noise and distractions. For this reason, spending time alone with God in silence is perhaps the most challenging and least experienced spiritual practice among Christians today. However, that doesn’t justify taking a pass. If we fail to learn

how to be quiet in God's presence—to stop talking long enough and routinely enough to listen—how will we mature into Christian adults? How will our relationship with God develop any depth?

There are a number of ways to approach this. The following are a few guidelines to help you begin entering into silence and stillness:⁴

- Settle into a comfortable and quiet place. Take a few deep breaths, allowing yourself to inhale and exhale slowly. (For additional guidance on a practice called the “breath prayer,” see Appendix B, pages 177–78).
- Begin with a simple prayer—often just one word—that expresses your openness to God and your desire to spend time with him. You might use your favorite name for God, such as *Abba*, *Father*, or *Jesus*. Or you could use a phrase such as, *Here I am, Lord*. (My wife, Geri, often doesn't use any words, preferring to spend time with Jesus as two lovers might, content to simply be together in a quiet corner. In those moments she imagines God wrapping his arms of love around her).
- When distractions come—and they most certainly will come—entrust them to God's care and use your simple prayer phrase to turn your thoughts back to God.

Give yourself lots of grace here, especially at the beginning. Remember, this is a revolutionary and countercultural practice, not a walk in the park. When you choose to sit in silence and stillness, you are choosing to allow God to be the center of your life. That means you are choosing, even if just for a few moments, to let go of control and your own agenda.

That is no small thing.

But if you persevere through the awkwardness at the beginning—if you truly stop to surrender your will to God’s will—you will begin to experience a gradual transformation. And slowly, you will find that silence will become a normal and regular part of each day. You will find yourself briefly pausing for silence, for example, before turning on the car, writing a difficult email, or starting a meeting at work.

2. *Scripture.* The important thing to remember here is the adage that “less is more.” The Scripture selections are intentionally brief. Read slowly—possibly aloud—chewing on any words or phrases that stand out to you. If God leads you to linger over a verse, do so. Be attentive to what God is doing inside of you. There is no need to finish all that is provided for each office! Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you.

3. *Devotional Reading.* Readings are drawn from a wide variety of sources—ancient spiritual writers, poets, monks, rabbis, and contemporary writers, as well as some of my own writings. As with Scripture, these selections are meant to be read slowly and prayerfully. There are times when I come to the midday or evening office with so much on my mind that I actually choose to begin my time of silence with the devotional reading as a means of redirecting my thoughts to God. Sometimes the readings will speak powerfully to where you are. At other times, you may find yourself wanting to skim or skip them. Once again, it’s important to remember that the purpose of the Daily Office is to commune with God, not to get through all the reading!

4. *Question to Consider.* Each office ends with a brief but probing question. You may find it helpful to write out your answers in the form of a prayer to God. Or, if you don’t find the questions helpful, feel free to skip them. If you use this guide repeatedly over time, don’t be surprised if God leads you along very different paths as you reflect on the questions each time.

5. Prayer. For a large part of my Christian life, I avoided written prayers. In recent years, however, I have found them to be a rich supplement to my devotional life. You may want to pray the words as written, or simply use them as inspiration and a starting point for your own prayers. Note that The Lord's Prayer is included in Appendix A as an additional resource for your time with God. Because of its depth and simplicity, I often pray it as part of my Daily Offices each day. Again, use these prayers only if you find them helpful.

In Appendix D, I have also included instructions about *compline* (pronounced "comp-line" or "comp-lin"), which is a going-to-sleep prayer of trust. Although it is prayed at the end of the day, I find that it also helps me to pay attention to God during all my waking hours.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

As you begin your journey with the Daily Office, I encourage you to allow a lot of time and practice to make progress in this. Few of us have life-giving rhythms, so rearranging our days to stop and be with Jesus is a major shift. Add to this the reality that little silence exists in the culture, our families of origin, even in our churches and the challenge can feel overwhelming. But I can assure you that if you will persevere and ask the Holy Spirit for help, you will find that God has been waiting for you. You will get to know him in ways that can happen only in silence (Psalm 46:10). Your listening-to-God "muscles" may develop slowly, but they will develop. By God's grace, your capacity to be with Jesus will enlarge and expand. But most importantly, you will discover, as millions of others have across the ages, that his love really is better than life (Psalm 63:3).

USING THE DAILY OFFICE WITH GROUPS

The Daily Offices are written for individuals, but they can be easily adapted for groups meeting for morning, midday, or evening prayer. Here are a few guidelines:

- Appoint a facilitator to pace the time.
- Read the Scripture selections aloud together.
- Appoint one person to read aloud the Devotional Reading and the Question to Consider.
- Pause briefly—five to ten seconds—between each section of the Office.
- Option: When our staff at New Life meets for midday prayer, rather than read the closing prayer aloud together at the end, we break up into groups of two or three for intercession and close with a worship song. Be flexible for what works best in your context.

The Problem of Emotionally Unhealthy Spirituality



DAILY OFFICES

Week One

Emotionally unhealthy spirituality wreaks havoc in our personal lives and our churches. When, for example, we deny the past's impact on the present, judge other people's spiritual journeys, or spiritualize away conflict, we hurt both ourselves and those around us. An emotionally unhealthy spirituality also hinders us from breaking deeply rooted, unhealthy relationship patterns and maturing in Christ.

The problem is twofold: First, we neglect to pay attention to what is going on inside us. And second, we are too busy to stop, slow down, and be with God. As a result, we run the high risk of remaining stuck as spiritual infants, failing to grow into spiritual/emotional adults in Christ.

Spending time with God each week through the Daily Office helps us give Jesus access to what is deeply beneath the surface of our lives and cultivate a deep, personal relationship with him. Learning to spend time with Jesus is God's way to transform us into free, mature disciples who can serve as gifts to the world.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Daily Offices throughout this book were written to be used as companions to *The Emotionally Healthy (EH) Spirituality Course*. Each week, the corresponding session from the course and DVD are listed as additional resources.

- *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality: Updated Edition*, chapter 1
- *The Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Workbook Updated Edition*, Session 1
- *The Emotionally Healthy Spirituality DVD: Updated Edition*, Session 1

DAY 1: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Mark 11:15 – 17

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

Devotional

Jesus’ intense anger and overturning of the tables in the temple courts ought to make us gasp. He knows that if we don’t get to God, invaluable treasures will be lost or obscured. We lose the space where we experience God’s unfailing love and amazing forgiveness. We lose an eternal perspective on what is important and what is not. We lose compassion. We gain the world but lose our souls (Mark 8:36 – 37).

Be Free for God

I have a need
of such clearance
as the Savior effected in the temple of Jerusalem
a riddance of clutter
of what is secondary
that blocks the way

to the all-important central emptiness
which is filled
with the presence of God alone.
—Jean Danielou⁵

Question to Consider

How would you describe “what is secondary” in your life, the thing that might be “blocking the way” to experiencing God?

Prayer

Lord, help me to see how much I lose when I lose you. My perspective on my life and all of life gets distorted when I don't make space for you, obscuring your love for me. Your love is better than life, and truly I long for more tastes of that love. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 1: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 15:22 – 23

But Samuel replied:

“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices
as much as in obeying the LORD?

To obey is better than sacrifice,
and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

For rebellion is like the sin of divination,
and arrogance like the evil of idolatry.

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
he has rejected you as king.”

Devotional

Saul, the first king of Israel, did not know much about silence or listening to God. Like David, he was a gifted, anointed, successful military/political leader. Yet unlike David, we never see him seeking to be with God. In this passage, Samuel the prophet reprimands Saul for doing many religious acts (i.e., offering burnt offerings and sacrifices) but not quieting himself enough to listen, or “to heed” God (v. 22).

We all must take the time to be silent and to contemplate, especially those who live in big cities like London and New York, where everything moves so fast. . . . I always begin my prayer in silence, for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is the friend of silence — we need to listen to God because it’s not what we say but what He says to us and through us that matters. Prayer feeds the soul — as blood is to the body, prayer is to the soul — and it brings you closer to God. It also gives you a clean and pure heart. A clean heart can see God, can speak to God, and can see the love of God in others.

— Mother Teresa⁶

Question to Consider

How could you make more room in your life for silence in order to listen to God?

Prayer

Unclutter my heart, O God, until I am quiet enough to hear you speak out of the silence. Help me in these few moments to stop, to listen, to wait, to be still, and to allow your presence to envelop me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 2: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Jonah 1:1 – 4

The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: “Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me.”

But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Then the LORD sent a great wind on the sea, and such a violent storm arose that the ship threatened to break up.

Devotional

Jonah is an example of a prophet with a case of emotionally unhealthy spirituality. He hears and serves God but refuses to listen to God’s call to love and show mercy to Nineveh, a world power of that day known for its violent, barbaric behavior. Jonah flees 2,400 miles in the opposite direction, to Tarshish, in present-day Spain.

And why Tarshish? For one thing, it is a lot more exciting than Nineveh. Nineveh was an ancient site with layer after layer of ruined and unhappy history. Going to Nineveh to preach was not a coveted assignment for a Hebrew prophet with good references. But Tarshish was something else. Tarshish was exotic. Tarshish was adventure.... Tarshish in the biblical references was a “far off and sometimes idealized port.” It is reported in 1 Kings 10:22 that Solomon’s fleet of Tarshish fetched gold,

silver, ivory, monkeys and peacocks.... In Tarshish we can have a religious career without having to deal with God.

— Eugene Peterson⁷

As Jonah runs, however, God sends a great storm. Jonah loses control of his life and destiny. He is thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish. It is from the belly of the fish that Jonah begins to wrestle with God in prayer.

Question to Consider

What internal or external storm might God be sending into your life as a sign that something is not right spiritually?

Prayer

Lord, may your will, not my will, be done in my life. You know how easy it is to call myself a Christian but then become busy, forgetting about your will and desires. Forgive me for this sin. Help me listen to you, and grant me the courage to faithfully surrender to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 2: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: 1 John 2:15 – 17

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Devotional

At the end of the third century in the deserts of Egypt, an extraordinary phenomenon occurred. Christian men and women began to flee the cities and villages to see God in the desert. They discerned how easy it was to lose one's soul in the entanglements and manipulations found in society, so they pursued God in a radical way by moving to the desert. They became known as the "Desert Fathers."

Society ... was regarded by them as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life.... These were men who believed that to let oneself drift along, passively accepting the tenets and values of what they knew as society, was purely and simply a disaster.... They knew they were helpless to do any good for others as long as they floundered about in the wreckage. But once they got a foothold on solid ground, things were different. Then they had not only the power but even the obligation to pull the whole world to safety after them.

— Thomas Merton⁸

Question to Consider

How do you hear the words of the apostle John today: "Do not love the world or anything in the world" (1 John 2:15)?

Prayer

Lord, in order to be with you, I need you to show me how to "create a desert" in the midst of my full, active life. Cleanse me from the pressures, illusions, and pretenses that confront me today so that my life may serve as a gift to those around me.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 3: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Genesis 32:22 – 26, 30

That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two female servants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

Devotional

Jacob's name can mean "cheat" or "grabber," and he lived up to his name. He was manipulative, deceptive, and aggressive — not someone you'd likely nominate for a leadership position in your church. Jacob was a seriously flawed person growing up in a dysfunctional family. He seemed to be either getting into trouble, just getting out of it, or about to make some more.⁹

Jacob's story is so universal because it is so personal. Throughout his life, Jacob was stubborn and unwilling to trust anyone — even God. It was at the Jabbok brook that Jacob was finally broken by God and radically transformed. He was given a new name and a new freedom to live as God originally intended. This came, however, at the price of a permanent limp that rendered him helpless and desperate

to cling to God. And it is out of this weak place of dependence that Jacob became a nation (Israel) that would bless the world.

In the same way, God sometimes wounds us in our journey with him in order to move us out of an unhealthy, “tip of the iceberg” spirituality to one that truly transforms us from the inside out. When these wounds come, we can deny them, cover them, get angry with God, blame others, or like Jacob we can cling desperately to God.

Question to Consider

In what way(s) has God put your life or plans “out of joint” so that you might depend on him?

Prayer

Father, I relate to Jacob in striving, manipulating, scheming, denying, and spinning half-truths to those around me in order to get my way. At times, I too find myself serving you in order to get something from you. Lord, I invite you to teach me to live in dependence on you. Help me to rest and be still in your love alone. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 3: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:21 – 23

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!”

Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Devotional

The apostle Peter had a passionate heart for Jesus, but he was also rash, proud, immature, and inconsistent. His impulsiveness and stubbornness are evident throughout the gospels.

Yet Jesus patiently led Peter to a crucifixion of his self-will, in order that he might experience genuine resurrection life and power.

When I am still, compulsion (the busyness that Hilary of Tours called “a blasphemous anxiety to do God’s work for him”) gives way to compunction (being pricked or punctured). That is, God can break through the many layers with which I protect myself, so that I can hear his Word and be poised to listen....

In perpetual motion I can mistake the flow of my adrenaline for the moving of the Holy Spirit; I can live in the illusion that I am ultimately in control of my destiny and my daily affairs....

French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal observed that most of our human problems come because we don’t know how to sit still in our room for an hour.

— Leighton Ford¹⁰

Question to Consider

What might be one way your busyness blocks you from listening and communing intimately with the living God?

Prayer

Lord, forgive me for running my life without you today. I offer my anxieties to you now — as best I can. Help me to be still, to surrender to your will, and to rest in your loving arms. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 4: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Luke 10:38–42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed — or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Devotional

Mary and Martha represent two approaches to the Christian life.

Martha is actively serving Jesus, but she is also missing Jesus. She is busy in the "doing" of life. Her life is pressured and filled with distractions. Her duties have become disconnected from her love for Jesus. Martha's problems, however, go beyond her

busyness. I suspect that if Martha were to sit at the feet of Jesus, she would still be distracted by everything on her mind. Her inner person is touchy, irritable, and anxious.

Mary, on the other hand, is sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to him. She is “being” with Jesus, enjoying intimacy with him, loving him, and taking pleasure in his presence. Her life has one center of gravity — Jesus. I suspect that if Mary were to help with the many household chores, she would not be worried or upset. Why? Her inner person has slowed down enough to focus on Jesus and to center her life on him.

Our goal is to love God with our whole being, to be consistently conscious of God through our daily life — whether we are stopped like Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, or active like Martha, taking care of the tasks of life.¹¹

Question to Consider

What things are worrying or upsetting you today?

Prayer

Help me, O Lord, to be still and wait patiently for you (Psalm 37:7). I offer to you each of my anxieties and worries this day. Teach me to be prayerfully attentive and to rest in you as I enter into the many activities of this day. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 4: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: Psalm 62:5 – 8

Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
my hope comes from him.

He alone is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honor depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge. (NIV 1984)

Devotional

David, a man after God's own heart, beautifully models the seamless integration of a full emotional life with a profound contemplative life with God. He trusts in the Lord, pouring out his struggles, fears, and anguish over the lies being said about him.

In *The Cry of the Soul*, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman summarize why awareness of our feelings is so important to our relationship with God:

Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality; listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God. . . . Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice. . . . However, we often turn a deaf ear — through emotional denial, distortion, or disengagement. We strain out anything disturbing in order to gain tenuous control of our inner world. We are frightened and ashamed of what leaks into our consciousness. In neglecting our intense emotions, we are false to ourselves and lose a wonderful opportunity to know God. We forget that change comes through brutal honesty and vulnerability before God.¹²

Question to Consider

What are you angry about today? Sad about? Afraid of? Pour out your response before God, trusting in him as David did.

Prayer

Lord, like David I often feel like a leaning wall, a tottering fence that is about to be knocked down! So many forces and circumstances seem to be coming against me. Help me, Lord, to find rest in you and to take shelter in you as my fortress. In Jesus' name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 5: MORNING/MIDDAY OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: John 7:2 – 8

But when the Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was near, Jesus' brothers said to him, "Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world." For even his own brothers did not believe in him.

Therefore Jesus told them, "My time is not yet here; for you any time will do. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that its works are evil. You go to the festival. I am not yet going up to this festival, because my time has not yet fully come."

Devotional

Jesus moved slowly, not striving or rushing. He patiently waited through his adolescent and young adult years to reveal himself as the Messiah. Even then, he did not rush to be recognized. He waited patiently for his Father's timing during his short ministry.

Why is it then that we hate “slow” when God appears to delight in it? Eugene Peterson offers us at least two reasons:

I am busy because I am vain. I want to appear important. Significant. What better way than to be busy? The incredible hours, the crowded schedule, and the heavy demands of my time are proof to myself — and to all who will notice — that I am important. If I go into a doctor’s office and find there’s no one waiting, and I see through a half-open door the doctor reading a book, I wonder if he’s any good....

Such experiences affect me. I live in a society in which crowded schedules and harassed conditions are evidence of importance, so I develop a crowded schedule and harassed conditions. When others notice, they acknowledge my significance, and my vanity is fed.

I am busy because I am lazy. I indolently let others decide what I will do instead of resolutely deciding myself. It was a favorite theme of C. S. Lewis that only lazy people work hard. By lazily abdicating the essential work of deciding and directing, establishing values and setting goals, other people do it for us.¹³

Question to Consider

What is one step you can take today to slow down and live more attentively to the voice of Jesus?

Prayer

Lord, grant me the grace to do one thing at a time today, without rushing or hurrying. Help me to savor the sacred in all I do, be it large or small. By the Holy Spirit within me, empower me to pause today as I move from one activity to the next. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)

DAY 5: MIDDAY/EVENING OFFICE

Silence and Stillness before God (2 minutes)

Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7 – 10

Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Devotional

The Bible does not spin the flaws and weaknesses of its heroes. Abraham lied. Hosea’s wife was a prostitute. Peter rebuked God! Noah got drunk. Jonah was a racist. Jacob lied. John Mark deserted Paul. Elijah burned out. Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal. Thomas doubted. Moses had a temper. Timothy had ulcers. Even David, one of God’s beloved friends, committed adultery with Bathsheba and murdered her husband. Yet all these people teach us the same message: that every human being on earth, regardless of their gifts and strengths, is weak, vulnerable, and dependent on God and others.¹⁴

The pressure to present an image of ourselves as strong and spiritually “together” hovers over most of us. We feel guilty for not measuring up, for not making the grade. We forget that all of us are human and frail.

The apostle Paul struggled with God not answering his prayers

and removing his “thorn in the flesh.” Nevertheless, he thanked God for his brokenness, knowing that without it, he would have been an arrogant, “conceited” apostle. He learned, as we all must, that Christ’s power is made perfect only when we are weak.

Question to Consider

How might brokenness or weakness in your life today present an opportunity for God’s power to be demonstrated?

Prayer

Father, the notion of admitting to myself and to others my weaknesses and failures is very difficult. Lord, I am weak. I am dependent on you. You are God, and I am not. Help me to embrace your work in me. And may I be able to say, like Paul, “when I am weak (broken), then I am strong.” In Jesus’ name, amen.

Conclude with Silence (2 minutes)