

Listening Prayer

The world sure is a noisy place. Cliché, right?

Yet, the noise around us and the constant opportunity for distraction tends to rob us the benefits to slowing down to hear from God. Listening to God requires true intentionality. Even when we pray, it's easy to be the one doing all the talking. But, each day, we have the opportunity to hear from the God of ultimate wisdom. Think about that: you have an audience with the God who knows all things. Does it make sense, then, that we would be the ones doing all the talking? Of course not. We have to learn how to listen to the voice of God. In John 10:27, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me."

In the practice of Listening Prayer, you eliminate as many distractions as possible and quiet your heart and mind so that you are free to hear anything that God may want to say to you.

Here is how it works. Find a quiet place where you won't be distracted (it's recommended that you turn off your phone).

1. Sit as comfortably as possible and offer a simple prayer asking God to help you become aware of His presence.
2. Focus your thoughts on your breathing. Imagine that you are breathing in God's love for you and breathing out anything that may be weighing on you.
3. When you're ready, ask God if there is anything He wants to say to you. Then, simply listen for God to speak.
4. You may also bring difficult situations before God. Ask if there is anything He wants you to do to bring help or relief to the difficult situation. Then, listen.
5. At the conclusion of your listening prayer, give God thanks for being present with you. If God has spoken to you, make plans to act on what you heard. If God chose to not speak, thank Him for His attentiveness to you. Ask for God's help to remain open to His voice at all times.

This tends to be a difficult practice, especially for those who are new to it. It's a challenge to silence your inner chatter and to stop thinking about the past and/or the future and to be in the present moment with God. The more you do it, the better you will get at it.