

Contemplative Prayer Walk

A contemplative walk is an invitation to slow down and spend time in the outdoors enjoying God's amazing creation. It's a great activity for children as well as adults, as children are natural contemplatives.

In Matthew 6:25-34 Jesus teaches his followers not to worry by using examples from nature that were all around them. In verse 26 (NIV) he says,

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

So too can we "look" at what is around us and ask God to speak to us through creation. For a contemplative prayer walk you don't need to take anything with you but here are some suggestions and ideas...

1. Slow down, walk slowly. Whether it's walking around your garden, a local park or along the street, walk slower than usual. When we slow down we notice things that we might normally rush by.
2. Notice the season, notice any bird song, notice any particular natural symbol that draws your attention. Notice the weather. Notice how your body moves. Notice where you are stressed and let God's natural world bring healing to your soul.
3. You might want to take a photo if you are brave enough to use your phone without being distracted! Focus on the meaning and not the quality of the image. What is the Holy Spirit saying to you though what you notice.
4. If near water, you might want to drop a stick in and watch it float away with those things that might be bothering you. Or drop a stone in and consider the ripples moving out and fading. What does it mean to you that God refreshes you soul and offers you "living waters"?
5. Mary met Jesus in the garden after his resurrection. How is Jesus shaping and nurturing your life? Where is he pruning you for greater fruit? Where is the rotting compost of your life creating new growth?
6. Be thankful. Be thankful for God's creation and what he is doing in your life.
7. Be present in the moment with Jesus. Walk with him. Talk with him.
8. As you start your journey back home, consider what things the Lord is prompting you to take up or leave behind.

A closing Prayer...

Dear God

I so much want to be in control

I want to be master of my own destiny

Still I know that you are saying"

'Let me take you by the hand and lead you.

Accept my love

And trust that where I will bring you,

The deepest desires of your heart will be fulfilled.'

lord, open my hands to receive your gift of love.

Amen (Henri Nouwen)