



Be still and know that I am God

Psalm 46.10

Prayer is encounter

Prayer is a time of encounter, when we open ourselves to God working within us.

Just like any other meeting, the ideal is to be relaxed, aware and attentive.

There is no one right way to pray - you need to find out what works for you. Each way of praying may need practice before it seems natural: be patient.

But the Lord was not in the wind..

the Lord was not in the earthquake...

the Lord was not in the fire.

And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

1.Kings 19:11

Finding Silence

Modern living can make us very unaccustomed to silence and stillness. Often we feel threatened by the thought of silence even for a short time. In prayer, the purpose of silence is to be able to 'hear' God with inner ears. This story from the Old Testament about the prophet Elijah may help you to understand how God seems to have a preference for stillness and silence as a way to communicate with us.

Then Elijah went into a cave and spent the night in it. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here Elijah?' Then he was told: 'Go out and stand on the mountain before God.' Then God passed by. There came a mighty wind, so strong it tore the mountains and shattered the rocks before God. But God was not in the wind. After the wind came an earthquake. But God was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire. But God was not in the fire. And after the fire there came the sound of a still, small voice, or a gentle breeze. When Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then a voice came to him which said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'

1 Kings 19:9, 11 - 14

Finding Stillness

This exercise may help you when you have a few moments to devote to stillness and silence.

- † Listen to all the sounds you can hear outside the room or area where you are. Don't push those sounds further away, but do not draw them any closer either. Just let them be - and in this way they need not be a distraction but, in fact, they will be absorbed into the whole.
- † Then listen, or be aware of the sounds, or, in particular, the people who are there, too. Once again, don't push them away, mentally, but don't draw them any closer. Just leave each person to be themselves.
- † Now be aware of yourself: your feet firmly on the ground; your legs; be aware that you are sitting, standing or lying down. Try to relax your back and shoulders. Let the muscles in your neck relax as a way of letting tensions fall away. Be conscious of your arms and hands right to the end of your fingerprints. Try to consciously relax the muscles in your face. Then bring your concentration to rest at whatever you feel is the centre of yourself. Take one or two good breaths then let your breathing find its own level: don't force it; just breathe naturally. When you have consciously quietened down, then listen to the atmosphere deep within yourself and try to notice what is your prevailing feeling. It is this atmosphere which you will bring to prayer.

Prayer for Stillness

God of stillness and creative action,
help us to find space for quietness today
that we may live creatively,
discover the inner meaning of silence,
and learn the wisdom that heals the world.
Send peace and joy to each quiet place,
to all who are waiting and listening.
May your still small voice be heard
through Christ, in the love of the Spirit. Amen.