

Taking a Contemplative Walk

Contemplative walking can increase our awareness, which can lead to an increase in our ability to notice God and that is what we are after in this spiritual practice.

Start your time by telling the Lord that your intention is to know and connect with his presence through this practice. Ask him to make that a reality for you.

As you start the walk, you can begin at your normal walking pace, but please, this is not to be a speed walking exercise, it is a “contemplative” walk. I would encourage you to intentionally slow down your pace as your walk progresses. This slowing down can be aided by the practical step of walking with your hands behind your back. This might feel odd but it will naturally slow you down.

This walk time can include prayer if you like. It can be a time for releasing the cares and burdens of your life. As you walk you might notice differing feelings arise in you.....anxieties, fears, concerns, when you notice them, release them into God’s care. You may also notice joy, delight or peace bubbling up, if that occurs, thank God for it and enjoy it.

A key element of this walk is the practice of “Noticing”, noticing the beauty of God’s created order. David opens and closes Psalm 8 by extolling the majesty of God. His praise of God is rooted in his noticing the glory of creation and the fact that in the midst of such majesty, God notices us humans. The key element is that David says,

“When I look at the night sky.... etc.” David took the time to look at, ponder and notice the created order around him. An important part of your walk time is to notice the created order around you. Plants, trees, bushes, animals (big and small), water, sky, sun stars, etc, as well as God’s greatest creation, the people who might be around you.

You are going to use all your five senses as you walk so start by being aware of the light, the warmth of the sun, the touch of the air and the colours around you. The begin to notice greater detail in patterns, shapes, thickness, the shades of colours, the contrast and juxtapositions and how things relate.

Take the time to see, smell and feel that which is around you.

Touch and feel, pick up stones, twigs, earth, leaves, and hold them gently. Try to stop thinking and simply, be. Let everything drop away and instead try to be totally present to what is reaching you through your senses.

Begin to notice smell more acutely, the scent of growing things, of the earth itself. Listen to the range of sounds, far distant sounds, those which are close, your own breathing.

At the end of your walk you may want to journal something that you particularly enjoyed. Perhaps you will feel that you might end with thanksgiving in which you quite consciously list the things you have discovered that God has given to you during the walk.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- What was it like for you to enter into this practice?
- Were there any feelings or emotions that you noticed surfacing in you during your time?
- What was it like for you to intentionally slow down your pace?
- What did you notice about the created order during your your walking time?
- In what way did you sense God's presence during your walk? In what ways did you encounter him during this time?
- Do you want plan another walk?