

No Time To Think

1. Warm-up: Jeff began Sunday's sermon with a story about two guys busily, mindlessly going about their work for the city, one digging holes, the other filling them in, even though their third partner (the tree planter) was out sick. What's something you've found yourself doing lately that feels like mindless, pointless busywork?

2. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a person thinks in their heart, so shall they become." So if a person allows themselves to become so busy they have no time to think, what do they become? Answer: Nothing. They are dooming themselves to a life of nothingness that's devoid of meaning. As Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."
 - a. Life is full of demands. What are some of the demands on your life right now that put stress on your schedule and make it hard for you to create space for rest, reflection, and renewal?

 - b. Being busy is not a bad; it's actually a good thing. God has put us here to accomplish lots of things. The problem is when we become so busy that it leaves no time to think. Where would you place yourself on the following scale?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Not enough to do, way too much time to think			Plenty to do, but also ample time to reflect and renew				Way too much to do, no time to think		

 - c. Blaise Pascal said, "The whole problem with humanity is that we don't know how to be alone with ourselves in our room." What do you think he meant? Are you uncomfortable being alone with yourself in the quiet? Why or why not?

 - d. Henry David Thoreau said, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived." Have you ever known someone who never really lived? Tell us about them. What trapped them in their lifeless existence?

 - e. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks was once asked, "If a person set their mind on keeping just one commandment, which one should they choose?" Sacks recommended the Sabbath command. He said, "If you keep Sabbath as a day of rest and reflection, the rest of the commandments will likely follow." What do you think he meant?

3. The story of Jesus told in the Gospels is constantly punctuated by statements like, "After he had dismissed the crowds, Jesus went up the mountain by himself to pray." Matthew 14:23. Again and again, Jesus models this pattern for us. Read the two scripture passages found on p. 3.
 - a. The Luke 9 passage tells us that while in prayer on the mountain, "The appearance of Jesus' face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white." What's the lesson in that for us?

- b. In the Luke 10 passage, Jesus tells Martha, “There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part.” What do you think Jesus’ meant?
 - c. What in life is more important than spending quality time in conversation with God?
4. In her book “Get Out of Your Head,” Jennie Allen says that spending quality time in Bible meditation and private conversational prayer with God is *the* single most important of seven key truths that anchored the mind of Christ and ought to anchor us, for all the reasons discussed above. Then Allen goes on to ask, “*Why is the simplest, best thing for our soul’s long-term health so crazy difficult to do?*” She proposes this answer: “Because we’re afraid of facing ourselves and, in turn, facing God. We’re afraid of being found out. We forget that God not only loves us but actually likes us too. Yep, God sees all. God even knows every thought before we think it. But somehow, unlike [the people around us], God has grace for all.” Like Adam and Eve, we’re often afraid to come into God’s presence naked and laid bare. We buy into the lie that if we bring our full, honest self into the presence of God, God will be disgusted and repelled. So to avoid having to face ourselves and God, we get lost in our busyness and hope God won’t find us there.
- a. Does that resonate with you? Do you think fear of exposing ourselves and facing our deepest thoughts, failures, worries, and insecurities is what causes us to avoid quiet time with God? Why or why not?
 - b. Jennie Allen points out that the Bible rebuffs the lie that causes us to avoid God with this simple truth, “Draw near to God and God will draw near to you.” James 4:8. In other words, when we lay our intimate thoughts bare before God, far from being repelled, that actually draws God closer to us. Why? Psychologically, how do we explain that?
 - c. Think of a time when you laid bare your soul before someone – telling them everything (the good, the bad, and the ugly). Did that repel them or draw them closer? If closer, why?
 - d. Jeff said, “The truth is, even with all our shortcomings, God adores us and longs to spend quality time with us.” Do you believe God adores you? Do you believe God longs to spend quality time with you? Why or why not?
 - e. Suppose you were to get into the habit of spending regular quality time meditating on the Bible and engaging God in intimate conversation. How do you think that might affect your life?
5. Jeff shared a sermon handout offering tips about how to have *real* conversations with God. Take a look at that handout, found on p. 4. What questions or thoughts arise within you as you review the information there? Are you comfortable engaging God in this way? Are you willing to give it a try? Why or why not?

Luke 9:28-36

28 Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³⁰Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. ³²Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah'—not knowing what he said. ³⁴While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵Then from the cloud came a voice that said, 'This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!' ³⁶When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

Luke 10:38-42

38 Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying.

⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.' ⁴¹But the Lord answered her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. ⁴²There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.'

Practical How-To Tips for Personal Conversational Prayer

Prayer is the essential foundation for a quality personal relationship with God. Everything else in life springs from there. Quality relationships of any type require deep communication. If we don't get our prayer life right, our relationship with God will be dry. Here are some practical tips that can help deepen your prayer life.

1. Don't do two things at once.
2. Get away; find a quiet place where you can unwind and be yourself. (Don't take your phone.)
3. Don't be restricted by posture.
4. Try talking aloud. Talk about what's on your mind instead of what you think you're supposed to. If your mind wanders, talk to God about what your mind wanders to. This is a *conversation*, not a laundry list. Prayer is good therapy!
5. Consider making a prayer list or prayer journal.
6. Schedule the time and frequency of your prayer life.
7. Possible prayer structure (adapted from Anne Lamott):

Wow! What am I most thankful for?

Help! What are my greatest felt needs?

Woe! Where am I falling short? Tell God about it. (This is called confession.)

Listen! What might God want to say to me right now? (Repeat is aloud and ponder it.)

Experimenting With Personal Conversational Prayer

Using the tips offered above, spend at least 15 minutes in prayer three times this week. Check off the following boxes to keep track:

In these times of prayer, just talk to God about whatever is on your mind. If you get stuck or don't know what to say, trying talking to God about questions like the following:

- ✓ What is my greatest source of stress right now?
- ✓ What do I most fear right now?
- ✓ What is the greatest challenge I face right now?
- ✓ What is my greatest source of joy right now?

- ✓ How did today (or yesterday) go? What do I expect tomorrow (or today)?
- ✓ What is something I'm thankful for?
- ✓ Who do I know that really needs help right now? How can I help them?