

## Section 4

# A Very Simple Guide for Beginning

Jesus said:

*What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so concerned with **getting**, so you can respond to God's **giving**.... Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now.*

Matthew 6, *The Message*

Here is a contemporary way of expressing this:

*There is no event so commonplace but that God is present within it, always hiddenly, always leaving you room to recognize him or not to recognize him, but all the more fascinatingly because of all that, all the more compellingly and hauntingly...*

*Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is...touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.*

Frederick Buechner, *Listen to Your Life*

How can you start? Try copying the guide below, possibly printing it on a card, and putting it someplace in your home where you will see it during the day. Some put it over the sink where they wash dishes. Others put it on their bathroom mirror or on top of their Bible or where they sit to read the paper or watch television. Then use it as a guide for your daily praying.

You may use the separate items as a curriculum for a group meeting.

### **STOP**

Intentionally shift your attention.  
Pray to be open and notice  
what is happening, where love is.  
Do whatever helps you to open your  
mind, heart, and will.

### **LOOK**

Look back and notice  
what you received as a gift.  
Ask for gratitude. Say thanks.  
Notice what you are not grateful for.  
Ask for help.

## **LISTEN**

What might God be saying in  
your life, in scripture?  
Might God be in the love  
you receive and give?  
Might you be invited to let go,  
let come, to change?

You probably will learn this in stages. Take a small bit at a time.  
You can use the separate items as a weekly guide for a group.

## **STOP.**

How can you catch your breath, the Spirit or breath of God? Jesus said

*What I'm doing here is to get you to **relax**.*

You might think of this as a mini-sabbath where you can receive the rest from God.

Is it walking, listening to music, humming a hymn? Try noticing your breathing. As you breathe in and out, whisper something like:

Relax...Spirit.  
Let come.... let go.  
Or just intentionally relax.

## **LOOK.**

How can you REALLY look? Gaze. Let your heart and mind look. Remember what has happened and pay attention to what is happening now. Jesus said:

*Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now.*  
Ask, invite, be open to God teaching, caring for you as you:  
Gather in the manna, the daily bread.  
Reflect where you been fed, loved, seen, touched.  
Remember where love flowed through you. Can you give thanks?

Where were you stuck with anger, resentment, shame, guilt?  
Can you hand these over to God, receive forgiveness, forgive?  
Where is the pain in the world? Don't turn away.

## **LISTEN.**

Listen with your heart. What is God saying in life, in scripture?  
What are people saying beyond their words? What is your body saying?

Jesus said:

*Are you listening to this? Really listening?*

As you read the Bible, newspapers, listen to TV, what resonates?

Have you heard this before? Do your friends and family agree that this is appropriate, that this is a “word” from the Lord?

**RECEIVE.**

Where is love, generosity, grace coming to you?

Can you receive Christ’s loving communion?

“Take, receive, This is my life broken for you.”

Can you stop negative self-talk and know that you are God’s beloved?

**DECIDE.**

What is wildly important for you, according to God’s desire and your wishing?

**Let go** of being in control. Where does the Spirit shift your awareness, teach you, move inwardly?

**Let come** the hints or nudges that may lead you to the next step. Pray something like “Holy Spirit, flow through me.”

**Go.** Be. Change. Ask for patient expectation. Get feedback.

**You may want to try the exercise this way:**

**Stop:** Breathe in the Spirit’s life, love, liberty.

**Look:** Look with the eyes at love.

**Listen:** Let the hints emerge.

**Go:** Let go of your agenda, drama.  
Breathe out.  
Take the next step.

Write down what you recognize God is doing so that you become more specific, and your observations become more tangible. What is “wildly important”?

**CONTINUE.**

Where can you be with others who can do this? Can you at least find one other person who can listen well? Most of us learn this best in community, observing others, receiving feedback for ourselves.

As you talk it over with others, see if you can get support for doing your version of this as a regular practice. Feel free to adapt it to fit you, now. As you listen to God in this process, what does God say, invite you to, as a regular practice? Relaxing? Being still? Letting go, letting come? Listening to God in scripture and life? Doing what you hear? All of the above at different times?

*Quit dressing your soul in someone else's piety. Your soul is not a pauper. Let it live its own life...Most of all, untie your soul, give it room to breathe, let it play, do not be ashamed of it. It is the child of the eternal and destined for greater things than you dream.*

Samuel Miller, *The Life of the Soul*