

C O U R S E

WORKBOOK



Connecting with God through Nature



HELLO THERE!

Do you love nature?

A walk or hike in beautiful countryside?

Creation is a perfect place to connect with God, the Creator.

It's a place to slow down, breathe, be silent, use all of your senses and intentionally pay attention and connect with God, perhaps in new and fresh ways.

This workbook is designed to be used on your own or with others and it is an invitation for you to meet with God through His beautiful creation. I hope it blesses you. Let's dive in!

Julie Baldwin

EXERCISE

01

SLOWING DOWN

Entering into Stillness

ENTER SLOWLY

We don't realise this most of the time but we move at a fast pace. We are constantly in a hurry. But today you are going to take some time to intentionally do the opposite- you are aiming for SLOW.

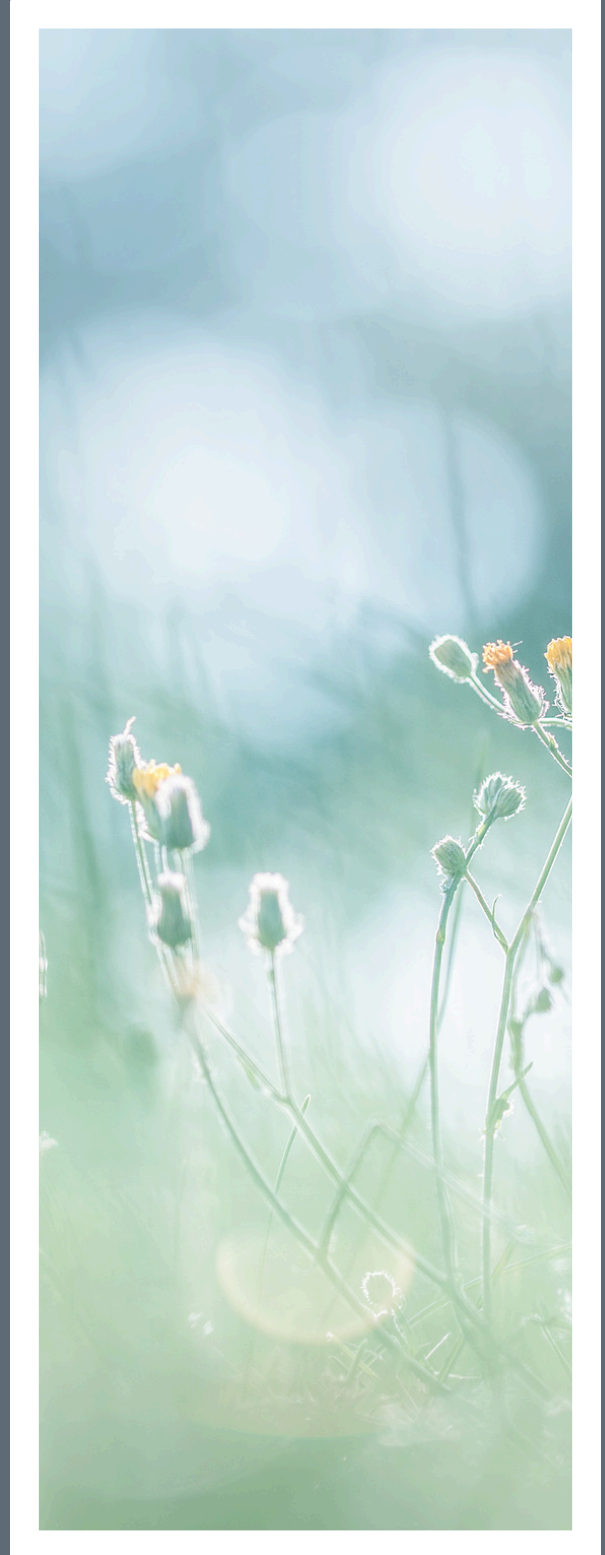
When we slow down our rate of movement, our breath, our mind, and enter a quiet space, something starts to happen.

We begin to notice: We notice the world around us, we notice what is happening in ourselves and we notice God. It wasn't that He wasn't there but the world around us was too noisy and we were just too busy to notice.

Ruth Haley Barton says

"The invitation into solitude & silence is to enter deeply into the intimacy of relationship with the One who waits just outside the noise & busyness of our lives."

God's beautiful creation is a great place to meet with God. To gaze upon beauty is to gaze upon God. This first exercise is to settle into stillness. Don't be surprised at how long it takes. But allow the time to enter into a slower way of being where He says He can be known. On the next page are a few prompts to help guide you in this space.



"Be still and know that I am God"

Psalm 46:10



SLOW

Go for a slow walk. Intentionally walk slower than you normally would. Allow your body to relax. Loosen your shoulders, relax your posture. Once you feel your body slowing, find a quiet spot in nature and sit. Make sure it's free from disruptions.

Put aside your mobile phone and anything that may distract you and get comfortable.

Take a moment to settle and come into the space. Let your body and soul arrive in this quiet place.



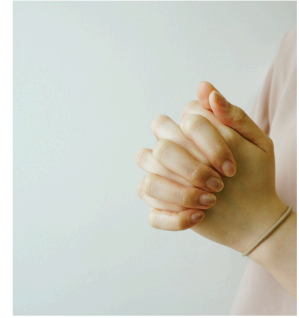
BREATHE

Take a few deep, slow breaths- inhale deeply and exhale slowly. This also helps your mind to settle. As you sit quietly and breathe, begin to turn each breath into a prayer.

You can say a repeated word as you breathe such as "Jesus", "Father", or "Here I am Lord".

Repeat this for as long as it takes to slow down into the space.

Or you might like to breathe out your anger, sadness or grief and breathe in God's joy, hope, peace & love.



PRAY

Take some time to enjoy and be present to God who is with you. Simply sit in loving attention on God. The Psalmist David in Psalm 27 longed to "gaze upon the beauty of the Lord" and that's our intent today.

Allow whatever you feel rise to the surface, and then gently hand it to God.

Sit in prayerful silence, opening yourself to God. There is no need for words just the intention of giving your full attention to God.

Gather Me – Ted Loder (Guerillas of Grace)

O God,
gather me now
to be with you
as you are with me.
Soothe my tiredness;
quiet by fretfulness;
curb my aimlessness;
receive my compulsiveness;
let me be easy for a moment.

O Lord, release me from the fears
and guilts which grip me so tightly;
from the expectations and opinions
which I so tightly grip,
that I may be open to receiving,
to learn something refreshingly different.

O God, gather me to be with you as you are with me.

Keep me in touch with myself,
with my needs,
my anxieties,
my angers,
my pains,
my corruptions,
that I may claim them as my own
rather than blame them on someone else.

O Lord, deepen my wounds into wisdom;
shape my weakness into compassion;
gentle my envy into enjoyment,
My fear into trust,
my guilt into honesty,
my accusing finger into tender ones.

O God, gather me to be with you as you are with me.

EXERCISE

02

CREATING SPACE

The art of surrendering

LETTING GO

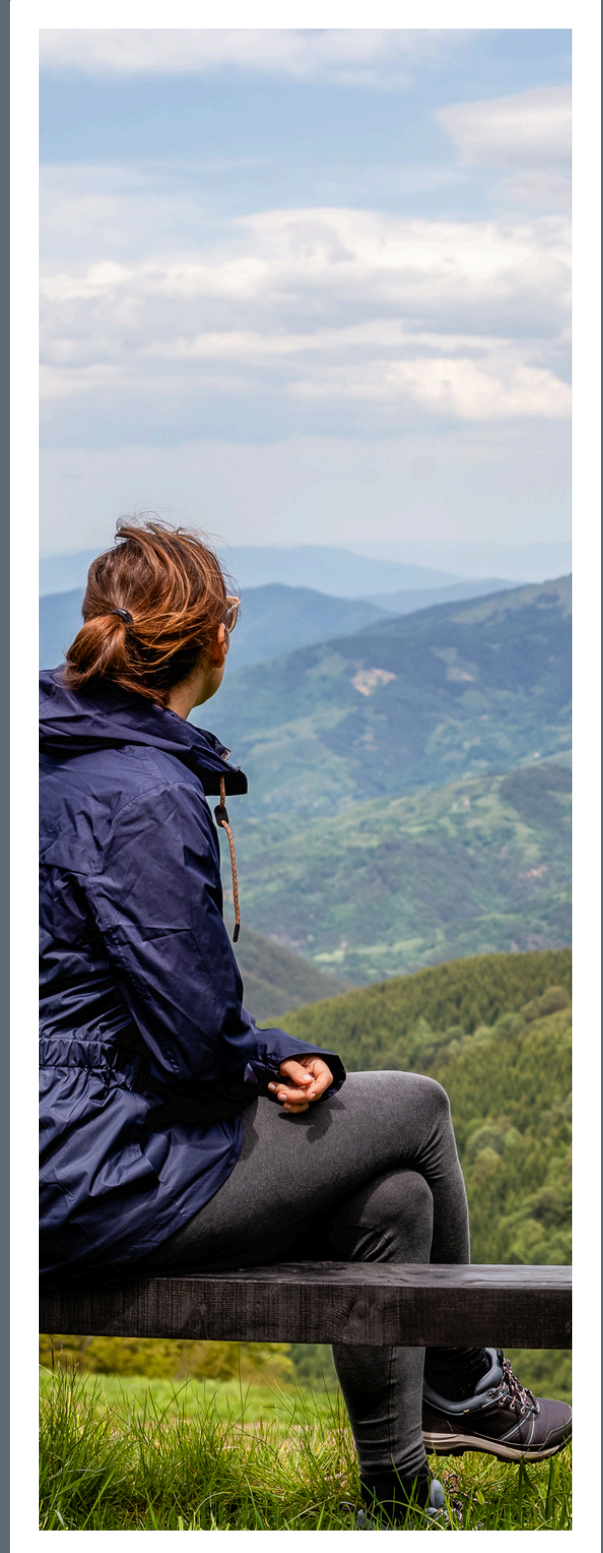
"Today, let it be enough to create space for yourself and those things that are stirring in the interior places of your soul. Listen to them not as experiences to be avoided but as invitations to open yourself to God in new ways."

Ruth Haley Barton

In silence we create space for God's activity rather than our own agenda. Take some time to enjoy and be present as you sit in His creation to God who is with you. Simply sit in loving attention on God.

As you enter into stillness your mind will seize the opportunity to be filled with thoughts, when this happens just release them to God and allow your body and mind to enter this quiet space before God.

Allow whatever you feel rise to the surface, and then gently hand it to God. If thoughts come just release them and return to God. This exercise offers the invitation to surrender anything that rises to the surface to God. You can use the next page to journal your prayer to God.



This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

EXERCISE

03

PAY ATTENTION

The Art of Noticing

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Look at the birds of the air. they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Matthew 6:25–34.

NOTICING

This third exercise is about noticing what is around you. Use all of your senses:

- Listen - what do you hear?
- Smell - Are there fragrances from flowers or trees?
- Look - what do you notice in creation? Look up, out & down. Is there something particularly that stands out to you and speaks to your soul?
- Touch- is it possible to touch the leaves, grass, flowers, tree bark

Spend some time observing the natural world around you. As Jesus says - consider it.

- What does it tell you about God and who He is?
- What does that mean for you in your life?

Consider the words that Jesus spoke in Matthew 6:25-34 (On previous page)- is there a word or phrase that is inviting you to pay attention to today?

Use the following page to journal some thoughts or write your own prayer or perhaps craft a poem.



[illegible]

GRATITUDE

Give God thanks for meeting you today.



Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean –
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down –
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
*Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

Mary Oliver

THANK YOU!



Let's Keep In Touch!

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