

An Autumn Soul Care Retreat

"Behold & Be Held"

Designed by
Dr. Mark A. Looyenga
Mark@soulscapejourney.com

An Autumn Soul Care Retreat: Behold & Be Held

A Possible Retreat Schedule

10:00 Worship & Grounding/Stillness Practices

10:45 Reflection 1: Behold God

11:45 Group Sharing

12:15 Lunch

1:00 Worship & Practices

1:15 Reflection 2: Being Held by God

2:15 Group Sharing

2:45 Communion

3:00 Adjourn

Beholding God

Isaiah 40 begins with God saying, "Comfort my people." It ends with verses 26-31 in the box. Read these verses and then use the following questions to guide your reflections.

Note how God's character is described in the following verses:

v. 26

v. 28

v. 29

v. 31

What do you see in these character traits of God's transcending power and God's closeness-power? What of God do you sense drawing your heart?

Using the picture page at the back of this handout, find a picture that captures something of your recent experience of trouble. Which picture number did you choose? What about the picture expresses your story of trouble?

Have you ever watched an eagle soaring in the sky? What do you imagine that would be like? What would be required?

Isaiah 40:26-31

²⁶Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. ²⁷O Jacob, how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? ²⁸Have you never heard? Have you never understood?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary.

No one can measure the depths of his understanding. ²⁹He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. ³¹But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Spend the rest of the time talking with God about your reflections. Use the space on the back as you feel led. This could include jotting notes, writing God a letter, drawing a picture, doodling, ...whatever helps you to behold your thoughts with God.

Being Held by God

Circle any of the words below (v.29- 31) that connect with how you feel/have felt in a recent time of trouble. Feel free to add other feelings you have to the list.

Weak	Powerless	Tired	Exhausted
Stumbling	Falling	Faint	Weary

How often do you stargaze? What's a memory you have of looking at the stars? What feelings/thoughts emerge?

If not a single star is missing (v.26), what is Isaiah implying about God's care of you?

From the picture cards laid out around the room, find one that captures either your gratitude for the way God is holding you with his empowering presence. Or find a picture that captures how you long for God to hold you with his empowering presence.

Read Matthew 11:28-30.

How does Jesus describe himself? Reflect on how this connects with God's empowering presence you noted from Isaiah.

Where is Jesus in the picture you chose? How is he inviting you to be held by him within this picture?

Spend the rest of the time resting with the Lord. Give him your weary parts as he leads you. Use the space on the back as you feel led. This could be you writing notes, a letter, drawing a picture, doodling... whatever helps you to release yourself to be held by the Lord.

Isaiah 40:26-31

²⁶Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. ²⁷O Jacob, how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? ²⁸Have you never heard? Have you never understood?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary.

No one can measure the depths of his understanding. ²⁹He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. ³¹But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

Beholding God in Nature

Go outside. Take a walk or find a good place to sit. What do you notice in your natural surroundings (trees, colors, birds...)?

What do you notice about how your body feels? What is your breathing like? Where do you feel relaxed? Where do you feel tension?

As you feel led, pause. lift your face up to the sky for a moment. What do your reflections prompt you to say to God? Spend a few moments doing so. Then listen for his response.

Read slowly through Isaiah 40:26-31. Note how Isaiah draws out God's character of both his transcendent power and his closeness of power.

How does what you see in this passage connect with your beholding God in Nature?

Isaiah 40:26-31

²⁶Look up into the heavens. Who created all the stars? He brings them out like an army, one after another, calling each by its name. Because of his great power and incomparable strength, not a single one is missing. ²⁷O Jacob, how can you say the LORD does not see your troubles? O Israel, how can you say God ignores your rights? ²⁸Have you never heard? Have you never understood?

The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth. He never grows weak or weary.

No one can measure the depths of his understanding. ²⁹He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. ³⁰Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. ³¹But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Spend time talking through these connections with God. Then just sit in silence of God's presence.

Being Held by God – the Garden & the Cross

Imagine yourself sitting near Jesus in the following two scenes.

The Garden (Matthew 26:36-45).

As you sit for a few moments in silence looking at Jesus what is your initial reaction?

*What do you notice about how he beholds God?
How is God holding him?*



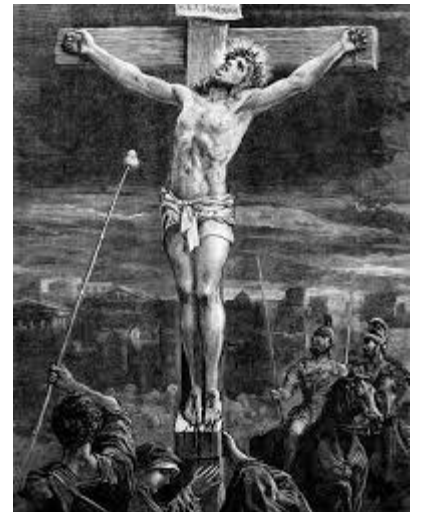
What feelings/ thoughts/ questions are in your gut or are coming into your awareness?

The Crucifixion (John 19:16-27)

As you sit for a few moments in silence looking at Jesus what is your initial reaction?

What do you notice about how he beholds God? How is God holding him?

What feelings/ thoughts/ questions are in your gut or are coming into your awareness?



Slowly read the boxed passage through twice. What word or phrase is drawing your attention? Linger with that word or phrase... Note any sensations or situations that come up for you?

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

What insight do your preceding reflections bring to the word or phrase?

How is Jesus inviting you to be held in your belovedness through the word or phrase? What is your resistance to and/or longing for what he is inviting you into?

How would you express this in a prayer? Use the space below to express your heart about what it's like for you to be held by God as his beloved child.