

**Our Conversation on Same Sex Relationships: Church Polity & Leadership
An Introduction**

Sunday March 1, 2026

11:30 - 12:30

Sanctuary - Live Streamed & Recorded

Opening Prayer & Introduction	Susan Graham
Historical Information	Graig Flach
Inclusion Committee Charter & Purpose	Karen Prigodich & Matt Eckmann
Question in Consideration for Session	Graig Flach
Q & A	Conley Zomermaand
Review of Process & Polity	Susan Graham
Scripture and Prayer Practices	Susan Graham
Corporate & Closing Prayer	Susan Graham

Standards and Guidelines for Ordained Leaders at Lake Grove Presbyterian Church

Background

In 2005, the Session of Lake Grove Presbyterian completed a long-term plan that established priorities to guide the church for the coming years. Two important near-term priorities were established.

One priority was to enhance the Sanctuary. The facility was approaching fifty years of age and in need of significant repair and enhancement. The Sanctuary Enhancement Project began shortly thereafter and was completed in the fall of 2008.

Another priority was to revise Lake Grove's governance model with the goal of enhancing church leadership. As a result, new church bylaws (official rules that govern the church) were prepared. The bylaws were approved by the congregation in 2009. This "governance" work continued with considerable discussion about what it meant to be an elder and a trustee. New position descriptions were developed and approved. During this process, it was recognized that further guidance was needed to better define the standards and guidelines that the Nominating Committee uses to call members into leadership.

Concurrent with this effort, certain changes to the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) were approved in 2011 further necessitating the need to establish standards and guidelines for church leadership, specifically ordained leadership.

Therefore, in response to both internally and externally driven needs, the Session has approved the following standards and guidelines for ordained leadership at Lake Grove Presbyterian Church:

Standards and Guidelines

All ministry in the Church is a gift from Jesus Christ. We are all fallen sinners living in a broken world and yet saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and called to serve in various ministries. While membership in the Church is open to all persons who confess Jesus Christ as Lord, those nominated to ordained leadership (pastors / teaching elders, ruling elders, and deacons) are called to a different level of commitment, and so additional standards and guidelines are appropriate.

The Book of Order affirms that "*standards for ordained service reflect the church's desire to submit joyfully to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life*" (G-2.0104b). It also reminds us that "*God alone is Lord of the conscience*" (F-3.0107) and that "*freedom of conscience with respect to the interpretation of Scripture is to be maintained.*" However, as the Book of Order also affirms, "*in entering the ordered ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), one chooses to exercise freedom of conscience within certain bounds*" (G-2.0105)," and it is the Session's responsibility to establish standards and guidelines for those who serve as ordained leaders of Lake Grove Presbyterian Church.

Toward that end, and in keeping with the Book of Order:

"The council responsible for ordination and/or installation (G-2.0402; G-2.0607; G-3.0306) shall examine each candidate's calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the responsibilities of ordered ministry. The examination shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of the candidate's ability and commitment to fulfill all requirements as expressed in the constitutional questions for ordination and installation (W-4.4003). Councils shall be guided by Scripture and the confessions in applying standards to individual candidates. (G-2.0104b)

I. Personal beliefs and behaviors consistent with ordination vows and essential tenets of Reformed faith², including:

A. The Word of God:

We recognize and receive God's authoritative self-revelation, both in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and also in the incarnation of God the Son.

B. The mystery of the Trinity:

With Christians everywhere, we worship the only true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – who is both one essence and three persons.

C. The mystery of the Incarnation:

We affirm with Christians everywhere that Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human.

D. God's grace in Christ:

We confess that the present disordered state of the world is a result of humanity's sinful rebellion against God's will. Apart from God's initiative, salvation is not possible for us. Our only hope is God's grace. In union with Christ through the power of the Spirit we are brought into right relationship with the Father, who receives us as His adopted children.

E. Election for salvation and service:

God chooses us for Himself in grace, not because of any merit on our part, but only because of His love and mercy. We are not elected for our own benefit alone. God gathers His covenant community to be an instrument of His passion for justice and His saving purpose in Jesus Christ.

F. Covenant life in the church:

In Christ, we are adopted into the family of God and find our new identity as brothers and sisters of one another, since we now share one Father. Our faith requires our active participation in that covenant community. Within that community of the church God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the loving support of the community of faith, and the faithful practice of mutual discipline.

G. Faithful stewardship of all of life:

We affirm that men and women alike are called to all the ministries of the Church, and that every member is called to share in all of Christ's work in the world beyond the church. Jesus teaches us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul,

² For a further exposition of these beliefs and behaviors, see *The Fellowship: Theology Project*.

and with all our mind, and our neighbor as ourselves. All of human life is therefore subject to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

H. Living in obedience to the Word of God:

Progress in holiness is an expected response of gratitude to the grace of God, and the first response of gratitude is prayer that includes praise, confession of sin, and intercession. Confession involves regular self-examination guided by Scripture in general and the Ten Commandments in particular. We therefore hold one another accountable to:

1. worship God alone, living all of life to His glory, renouncing all idolatry and all inordinate loves that might lead us to trust in any other help;
2. worship God in humility, being reticent in either describing or picturing God, recognizing that right worship is best supported not by our own innovative practices but through the living preaching of the Word and the faithful administration of the sacraments;
3. eliminate from both speech and thought any blasphemy, irreverence, or impurity.
4. observe the practice of Sabbath disciplines for times of worship and rest, being faithful in gathering with the people of God;
5. give honor toward those set in authority over us and practice mutual submission within the community of the church;
6. eradicate a spirit of anger, resentment, callousness, violence, or bitterness, and instead cultivate a spirit of gentleness, kindness, peace, and love; recognize and honor the image of God in every human being.
7. maintain chastity in thought and deed, being faithful within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman as established by God at the creation, or embracing a celibate life as established by Jesus in the new covenant;
8. practice right stewardship of the goods we have been given, showing charity to those in need and offering generous support of the Church and its ministries;
9. pursue truth, even when such pursuit is costly, and respectfully defend truth when it is threatened, recognizing that truth is in order to goodness and that its preservation matters; and
10. resist the pull of envy, greed and acquisition, and instead cultivate a contentment with the gifts God has given us.

II. Gifts and abilities

A. Demonstrated gifts appropriate to each office and area of service (see position descriptions for each office), including:

1. For elders: discernment, organization, capacity for vision, compassion, commitment, desiring justice, and strategic planning.
2. For deacons: mercy, hospitality, dependability, compassion, and a desire to serve those in need – a servant heart.

B. Ability as ruling and teaching elders to work through complex issues and draw conclusions based on Scripture and the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the capacity to listen respectfully to all viewpoints (including those that differ from one's own).

C. Demonstrated ability to work effectively with teams of fellow elders, deacons, trustees, pastors, staff, and members.

III. Preparation and examination

A. Active membership in Lake Grove Presbyterian Church for not less than one year (elder) or six months (deacon), and a commitment to the life and ministry of this congregation as demonstrated by

1. Regular worship attendance;
2. Faithful financial support;
3. Involvement in at least one ministry area in the life of the church, or other ministries in the community and world.
4. Participation in opportunities for deepened faith and serve (e.g. small groups, Alpha, classes, BSF, mission trips, retreats, etc.)

B. The Book of Order requires the Session to provide for those being considered for ordination as ruling elders or deacons

1. "a period of study and preparation" and
2. an interview in which "the Session shall examine them as to their personal faith; knowledge of the doctrine, government, and discipline of the church; and the duties of the ministry." (G-2.0402)

C. At Lake Grove Presbyterian, a preparation class or seminar shall be offered for potential nominees for election to elder, deacon, and trustee (as well as other leaders in the life and ministry of the congregation).

D. Prior to nomination, each candidate shall meet with members of Session (or elders designated by Session) to discuss the following:

- The office of pastor, ruling elder, and deacon, and the appropriate ordination vows;
- Lake Grove Presbyterian's vision, mission and values;
- The candidate's personal beliefs and sense of calling, gifts, preparation, and suitability for the office;
- A review of the Standards and Guidelines policy; and
- Execution of Lake Grove Presbyterian's Verification and Release agreement.



September 12, 2014

Dear Lake Grove Presbyterian Family,

In late May of 2014 we, the pastors and ruling elders of your Session, wrote to inform you of some actions likely to be taken at the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in mid-June. We are writing today to share both the actions taken by the General Assembly and the policy response our Session has decided to make after engaging in a time of prayer and study of these actions.

As many of you know, the General Assembly took two actions on the question of same-sex marriage:

First, the Assembly approved an "authoritative interpretation" of the Book of Order to grant pastors discretion in determining whether or not to conduct same-sex marriages in states where such marriages are legal. This ruling effectively removed a ban on Presbyterian pastors conducting marriages for same-sex couples. The authoritative interpretation took effect immediately.

Second, the Assembly proposed an amendment to the Constitution of our denomination that would change the definition of marriage from "between a man and a woman" to "two people, traditionally [between] a man and a woman." The proposed amendment will now go to the denomination's 172 presbyteries for commissioners to vote on ratification during the next year. A majority of the presbyteries must ratify this action before it takes effect. The final outcome of these presbytery votes will not be known until 2015, but we believe it is likely that the proposed amendment will be ratified.

The Assembly was careful to protect the consciences of pastors and sessions regarding participation in same-sex marriages. A clause in the proposed amendment states: "Nothing herein shall compel a teaching elder {pastor} to perform nor compel a session to authorize the use of church property for a marriage service that the teaching elder or the session believes is contrary to the teaching elder's or the session's discernment of the Holy Spirit and their understanding of the Word of God."

Thus, the actions taken by the General Assembly do not require any pastor to officiate or any session to authorize the use of church property for same-sex marriages. It remains up to each pastor and session to discern what is and what isn't appropriate for their congregation.

With this in mind, we met as a Session on the evening of Tuesday, August 26 for a time of study and prayer. Since we had decided in 2012 to remain in the PC (USA) for the foreseeable future and to join the Presbyterian Fellowship Community, our agenda was limited to what policy responses should be made in light of the actions of the 2014 General Assembly. The Reverend Dr. Jeannine Graham, a faithful participant in the life of our church and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at George Fox University led us in a study of Scripture passages related to the biblical arguments in support of and opposition to same-sex marriage. This time reinforced for us the truth that Christians can and do read and interpret the same Scripture passages in different but no less faithful ways.

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At a separate meeting on Tuesday, September 9, we determined that our understanding of Scripture leads us to continue Lake Grove's historic policy and practice of authorizing marriage ceremonies between one man and one woman on church property.

We know there are differences among the members of this congregation on these matters, and that no policy action will bring all of us together in agreement. We appreciate the depth and breadth of convictions held by members of LGPC, and we have sincerely tried to take seriously the full range of views in our congregation on the matter of same-sex marriage. But the General Assembly's actions require us as a Session to formulate appropriate policies regarding the use of church property, and that is what we've sought to do.

We know this action will be welcome to some of our members and troubling to others. We care deeply for each person in our congregation, regardless of views on this issue. We believe this gives us a unique opportunity to love one another across any differences and live out the grace and truth found in Jesus Christ. We pray this will not be cause for dividing or distracting our church from pursuing the mission God has entrusted to us. Please pray with us that we maintain our commitment to "the Main Thing" – to Jesus Christ, to his people, and to his redemptive work in the world.

Please feel free to contact us with your questions or comments by sending a letter to the church with the notation "Attn: LGPC Session" or email our Executive Director of Ministry, Doug Hoy, at DoughH@lakegrovepres.org. We welcome your comments and will respond as quickly as possible to your questions.

We hope you'll join us as we "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

In Christ's service,

The Session of Lake Grove Presbyterian Church

Lake Grove Presbyterian Church
Task Force on Participation and Representation
Charter

Purpose

The purpose of the Lake Grove Presbyterian Church (“LGPC”) is to partner with Christ who transforms the world one life at a time. To this end, the Task Force on Participation and Representation (the “Task Force”) in alignment with LGPC’s Core Values¹ and in accordance with the Book of Order’s direction, is to develop procedures and mechanisms to promote and implement the church’s commitment to participation and representation while upholding the unity of the church.²

Authority and Responsibilities

The Task Force provides an advisory function for the LGPG Session, and does not have the authority to bind or make decisions or policy on behalf of LGPC or the LGPC Session.

The Task Force is responsible to study issues related to participation and representation of the rich diversity of people in the life of the church, with particular emphasis on those who encounter obstacles to engagement and participation due to gender, race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, level, mental or physical ability, or other characteristics the Task Force deems relevant. This work will be done in alignment with the core values of LGPC. The Task Force will make recommendations to the LGPC Session designed to (i) remove the obstacles facing and (ii) encourage the engagement and participation of all people in the life of LGPC. The Task Force will report on its findings, and in the Task Force’s discretion make recommendations to the LGPC Session as requested and directed by the LGPC Session, but at least twice per year.

¹ LGPC’s five core values: scripture, music, discipleship, missions, care

² G-3.0103

The Task Force is authorized, in its reasonable discretion, to take all actions necessary to carry out the above responsibilities, including without limitation conducting interviews, workshops, surveys, meetings.

Composition

The Task Force will be comprised of seven members, to be appointed by the LGPC Session. Three members will be women and three will be men. At least one member will be a current Session member and one member a lay member of the congregation. To the extent possible, members will reflect the rich diversity of people in the life of the church. Members will display a deep commitment to participation and representation, the unity of the church, awareness of and ability to listen for issues that may affect or obstruct the engagement or participation of any individual or group in the life of LGPC and the church.

The term of service for each Task Force member will be one three year term, which term may be renewed only once, or until that Task Force member's earlier death, resignation or removal.

Meetings

The Task Force will meet as directed by Session, but at least two times per year, and more often as deemed necessary by the Task Force. Meetings will be conducted at times and in locations determined by the Task Force, provided that no action may be taken (including without limitation the scheduling and conduct of meetings) by the Task Force without a majority of members in attendance (including by virtual means) voting or providing written consent in favor of any proposed Task Force action. Records of Task Force activity will be taken in such manner the Task Force deems practical for facilitating its activities and necessary for recording decisions made in carrying out the Task Force's purpose and responsibilities, and acting in accordance with its authority, under this Charter.

Question in Consideration Before Session

Shall we retain, remove, or revise the policy "Standards and Guidelines for Ordained Officers at LGPC" in regards to those in committed same-sex relationships?

Shall we remove or retain the wedding policy expressed in the Session letter from Sept 12, 2014 prohibiting same-sex weddings on our campus?



A SEASON OF PRAYER, LISTENING, AND DISCERNMENT REGARDING
SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS: CHURCH POLITY & LEADERSHIP

Opportunities for Congregational Engagement

Part One - Feb 22-April 26

SUN, FEBRUARY 22

Gathering Area

Registration for book study

opportunity to sign up and pick up book
(also available 3/1)

SUN, MARCH 1

11:30am-12:30pm

Sanctuary

Our Conversation on Same Sex

Relationships: Church Polity & Leadership:

An Introduction

Information session with Pastors and Elders

SUN, MARCH 8

5:00pm-6:30pm

Fellowship Hall

Space at the Table Book Discussion

1st Opportunity

SUN, MARCH 15

5:00pm-6:30pm

Fellowship Hall

Hermeneutics Workshop

(Interpretation of Scripture)

with Dr. Melissa Ramos, Associate Professor
of Hebrew Bible at George Fox University
Pre-reading available

MON, MARCH 16

7:00pm-8:30pm

Zoom

Space at the Table Book Discussion

ONLINE Opportunity

SUN, MARCH 22

11:00am-12:30pm

Fellowship Hall

Space at the Table Book Discussion

2nd Opportunity

WED, APRIL 8

5:30pm-8:00pm

Fellowship Hall

Gather at the Table - Skills & Practice

1st Opportunity (Identical to 2nd)

SUN, APRIL 12

5:30pm-8:00pm

Fellowship Hall

Gather at the Table - Skills & Practice

2nd Opportunity (Identical to 1st)

WED, APRIL 22

5:30pm-7:00pm

Fellowship Hall

Gather at the Table - Same Sex Relationships:

Church Polity & Leadership Focused

Conversation

SUN, APRIL 26

5:30pm-7:00pm

Fellowship Hall

Gather at the Table - Same Sex Relationships:

Church Polity & Leadership Focused

Conversation



SCAN HERE
TO REGISTER
FOR BOOK
DISCUSSIONS



SCAN HERE
TO REGISTER
FOR GATHER
AT THE TABLE

Some Thoughts on Biblical References and Interpretation

The Bible is made up of sixty-six books and over 31,000 verses. The subject of same sex relations appears very infrequently on its pages. The passages reflect the behaviors and cultural standards of ancient times. Godly, Christ-centered Biblical scholars read, interpret, and disagree with each other about these passages from their deeply-held perspectives. We your pastors hold to the notion that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and remain committed to the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. To believe one way or another on this issue should not be a reason to exclude the deep thoughts and beliefs of others, precluding the ability to live in Christ-honoring fellowship.

While the passages that address same-sex interactions in the ancient world are often negative about these practices, they do not necessarily give evidence that they speak to same-sex relationships of love and mutuality. It can be argued that what was being condemned in the Bible is very different than committed same-sex partnerships we know and see today. The New Testament regularly addresses the topic in a list of vices (1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Timothy 1:10), the argument being made is often about the sexual exploitation of young men by older men, a practice called pederasty; and what we read in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans is a part of a broader indictment against idolatry and excessive, self-centered lust that is driven by desire to "consume" rather than to love and to serve as outlined for Christian partnerships elsewhere in the Bible.

The passages outlined below have been variously used to support different perspectives on this subject.

Old Testament –

Genesis 1:26: *Let us create humankind in our image.* The assurance that all human beings are created in God's image reminds us that everyone is a sacred creation, and that God's image is broader than our own experience and understanding.

Genesis 2:18, 21-24: *Earliest biblical model for human sexuality- Adam & Eve.*

Leviticus 18:22/ 20:13: *Male/male intercourse forbidden along with a number of sexual acts.* The injunction that "man must not lie with man" coheres with the context of a society anxious about their health, continuing family lineages, and retaining the distinctiveness of Israel as a nation.

Genesis 19:1-29: *Men of Sodom want to have sexual relations with foreign men/angels visiting Lot's home.* (See the next reference)

Judges 19:22-25 : *Benjamite men want to have sex with a male stranger visiting a local man; the man offers his concubine instead, and they abuse her all night.* The stories of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) and the Levite's concubine (Judges 19) are about sexual violence and the Near East's stigma toward violating male honor.

Psalms 139: *For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.* This psalm sings of God's intimate and intentional knowledge of each person. It suggests that every crucial part of our identity was known to God, crafted by God before we were born — and that, as beings made in such love, we are created good.

Isaiah 56:3-5: *For thus says the Lord: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant...; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.* This text suggests that God's love for those deemed "sexually other" (re-emphasized generations later in Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch) promises everlasting recognition and inclusion for all who honor God, "outsiders" included.

New Testament –

Matthew 19:3-6; Mark 10:7-12: *In the context of discussing divorce, Jesus affirms God's male-female model. Jesus' relative silence on homosexuality does not imply tacit approval. Since there was no serious movement in favor, it was not a battle he needed to fight.*

Matthew 22:37-40: *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* Matthew addresses the great number of Jewish laws by making clear that the overarching command of a faithful life is love: love of God, and love of neighbor.

Romans 1:18-32: *The consequences of sin, choosing non-committed and abusive homosexual acts even though they are forbidden; such choices lead to additional consequences of sin.*

Acts 8:26-40: *"What is to prevent me from being baptized?"* Eunuchs in biblical times were *othered* and ostracized because of their failure to adhere to sexual norms. Their status as eunuchs barred them from inclusion in God's community. And yet, this eunuch seeks to follow the path of Christ even as he continues to live out his sexual otherness. And he is welcomed and joyfully baptized into Christ's community.

Acts 10:15: *"What God has made clean, you must not call profane."* When Peter protests, God reminds him that God's declaration of what is clean is above — and may even contradict — any command of the law.

I Corinthians 6:9-11: *Condemnation of various forms of sexually immoral behavior, including male prostitution and males in sexual acts with other males.*

I Cor 7:6-9: *In discussion of pros & cons of singleness and marriage, an implicit affirmation of the male-female model.*

Galatians 3:23-29: *There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.* This well-known passage is used in many contexts to sound the Christian call of unity in the face of division and difference. The phrase "there is no longer male and female" offers a challenge to traditional understandings of gender roles.

I Tim 1:9-11: *Rejection of various sins, including males having sexual relations with other males.*

Jude v. 7: *The sin of Sodom identified as "sexual immorality" and "unnatural lust".*

1 John 4:7-8: *Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Anyone seeking to follow God must also seek to love others. We must trust that anyone who loves is also born of God.*

Our Conversation: Same Sex Relationships: Church Polity & Leadership Praying Together

Anchoring in God Above All - Psalm 111:10

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.*

Holy One, help us place you above all else in our lives... (silence)

Trusting in God's Nearness and Guidance - Psalm 16:5-8

*Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup;
you make my lot secure.
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
surely I have a delightful inheritance.
I will praise the Lord, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I keep my eyes always on the Lord.
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

Gracious One, help us attune to your voice in everything... (silence)

The Gift of the Holy Spirit & Peace - John 14:26-27

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will
teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I
leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

Compassionate One, still our fears, empower us with your Presence and love...
(silence)

Love for One Another - John 13:34-35

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must
love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love
one another."*

Faithful One, keep us kind and loving toward one another, speaking truth in love...
(silence)

The Lord's Prayer



Nine Steps for Spending More Time with the Trinity each Day

In his many teachings on spending a day with Jesus, Dallas often made suggestions for how to best practice what he preached. Listed below is a compilation of those suggestions for arranging our lives in such a way as to spend more time with the Trinity.

THE MARTIN INSTITUTE



Step 1: Remember

The biblical day, God's day, begins at sundown—the early evening. Put down a period for the end of each day and restfully receive the new one. Enter into the new day in rest as an act of faith.



Step 2: Resolve conflicts (Forgiveness)

Make a habit of resolving any household or other interpersonal conflicts as appropriate and as best you can. While reconciliation requires the participation of the other person, forgiveness does not. Treat any unforgiveness as you would a burning coal. Let it go as quickly as you can and ask the Trinity to provide any healing ointment that is needed.

Step 3: Retire

Retire for the night as an over all attitude of faith in God versus faith in yourself. The same thing applies to putting more margins in your days and Sabbath keeping. Sleep, margin making, and Sabbath keeping are all acts of faith.





Step 4: Resolution to Meet God in the Morning

As you are going to sleep, commit to meet with God first thing when you awake and rehearse in your mind how you will do this. Perhaps you will resolve to breathe the Jesus Prayer as you are falling asleep and if you wake up in the middle of the night. Perhaps you will resolve to pray the 23rd Psalm and Lord's Prayer before you put your feet on the floor in the morning.



Step 5: Reverence and Awe

Begin the day with seclusion for morning devotions. Your reverence may involve praying on your knees, breathing a passage of Scripture, Scripture reading, etc. Confess that you cannot handle the day on your own. Tell God you belong to the Trinity and that you want "Them" with you through the day and exuberantly say (shouting is better) at least one thing for which you are deeply grateful.



Step 6: Release of Rush and Hurry

Make a game of slowing down. Walk with your hands behind your back; Be grateful for red lights as a chance for more conversation with God; Get in long lines at the grocery and pray a prayer of blessing for everyone you see. According to Dallas, "Haste will defeat you in your spiritual life and you must come to terms with it. Anytime you are in haste you are more or less out of control and you are out of control because you have over extended yourself."





Step 7: Remember the Hours and God Through the Day

Make a habit of keeping the hours. That is, pause every three hours to pray the Jesus Prayer and to remind yourself of your goal—to spend this day with the Trinity. “In between the hours, ask God’s blessing on each new thing you do, and ask God to be with you in each new activity.”



Step 8: Relay Gratitude to God and Others

“Begin to will the peace and love of God to others. People need to experience the benediction of God’s presence in you, in them. You have the power to speak the presence of God into other people if you are living in that presence yourself.”

Step 9: Recollect and Repeat

At the end of the day take 15 minutes to review the day. In some traditions this is called doing a Daily Examen. Classic steps for this type of review include: 1) Remind yourself of being in God’s presence and give thanks for God’s great love for you; 2) Pray for the grace to understand how God acted in your life today; 3) Review your day and recall the primary moments and feelings associated with those moments; 4) Reflect on what you did, said, or thought in those moments. Did it feel like you were moving closer to or further away from God? 5) Think of tomorrow and how you might collaborate even more effectively with God. Then you may want to breathe the Lord’s prayer.





“Father, we remember now that we are right here with you and that you are in our midst and that you love us and that you long for us to be healed and whole and that we do not do any of this on our own and that this universe is a perfectly safe place for us to be and that you are closer than the air we breathe. And so we ask that you would be at work now and help us and give us energy and openness and strength, and we pray this together in Jesus’ name.”

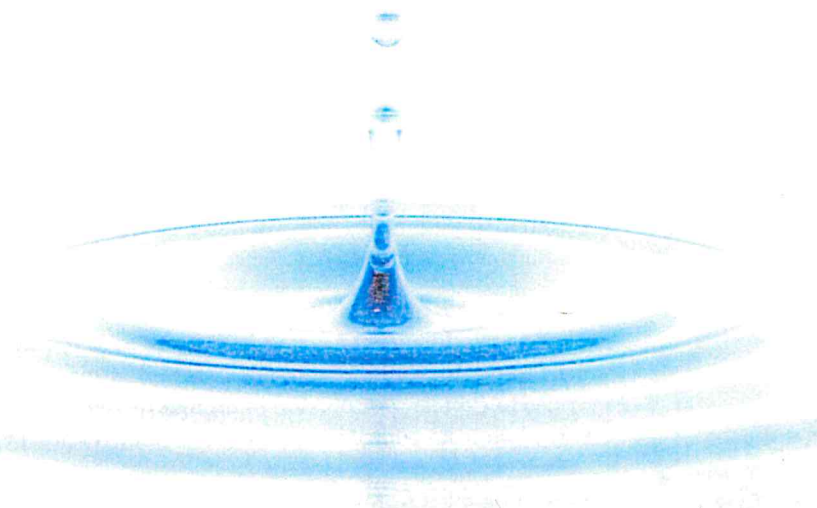
- DALLAS WILLARD, LIVING IN CHRIST’S PRESENCE

★ "A treasure of tried and true spiritual practices written well enough for everyone from the novice to the master to use."

Publishers Weekly

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES Handbook

PRACTICES THAT TRANSFORM US



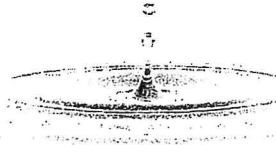
Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

"In a noise-polluted world, it is even difficult to hear ourselves think let alone try to be still and know God. Yet it seems essential for our spiritual life to seek some silence, no matter how busy we may be. Silence is not to be shunned as empty space, but to be befriended as fertile ground for intimacy with God."—Susan Muto

SILENCE

DESIRE	to free myself from the addiction to and distraction of noise so I can be totally present to the Lord; to open myself to God in the place beyond words
DEFINITION	Silence is a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without interruption and noise. Silence provides freedom from speaking as well as from listening to words or music. (Reading is also listening to words.)
SCRIPTURE	"But oh! GOD is in his holy Temple! Quiet everyone—a holy silence. Listen!" (Habakkuk 2:20 <i>The Message</i>) "After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper." (1 Kings 19:12) "There was silence in heaven for about half an hour." (Revelation 8:1) "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed." (Luke 5:16)
PRACTICE INCLUDES	• setting a period of time in which you don't speak but isolate yourself from sounds (other than perhaps the sounds of nature) • driving or commuting without the radio or CD player turned on • leaving the TV off; spending time in silence with God alone • exercising without attending to noise; listening to God • having personal retreats of silence
GOD-GIVEN FRUIT	• being attentive to the voice of Jesus • having freedom from negative habits of speech (deception, gossip, impulsive chatter, small talk, impression management, the need to express your opinion or critique) • freedom from addictions to noise or sound (radio, TV, phone, iPod, etc.) • receiving quiet from the chaos and the noise in your life • having deeper intimacy with God • growing in self-awareness as the silence invites the subconscious to move into deeper levels of knowing • developing increased listening skills

SILENCE



IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND SILENCE IN AN AGE OF technology and information. Silence challenges our cultural addiction to amusement, words, music, advertising, noise, alarms and voices. Silence asks for patience and waiting. And both silence and waiting make us uncomfortable. They seem so unproductive. We can't tell if we are *doing* anything in them. So when we come upon silence, we fill it. We cram it with something else we can learn or do or achieve.

We break the silence of travel with an iPod, the silence of the evening hours with the TV or computer, the silence of sleep with an alarm clock. Every part of our life is inundated with words—urgent words, random words, trivial words, hurtful words, managing words, religious words and on and on. In the midst of so many words it becomes difficult to know which messages are really important and which ones we need to remember. To get through the flood of words we develop skills like skimming and scanning. We look for bullet points and bold print. We ask for summaries. We urge people to be brief and cut to the chase. And when we think they aren't saying anything significant, we simply block out their words to attend to our own internal flood of words.

This habit of glancing at words and people extends to our relationship with God. We want pithy, memorable sermons. We want more religious words to chew on. The trouble is there are so many other things we are trying to remember that the sermon evaporates by the time we reach the parking lot. Could it be that what we need is time alone with God and a lot fewer words? Do we need to put on the "Do Not Disturb" button and learn what it is to be available to God alone?

We need to realize that the world can go on without us for an hour or a day or even longer. We don't need to respond to every word and request that comes our way. The discipline of silence invites us to leave behind the competing demands of our outer world for time alone with Jesus. Silence offers a way of paying attention to the Spirit of God and what he brings to the surface of our souls.

In quietness we often notice things we would rather not notice or feel. Pockets of sadness or anger or loneliness or impatience begin to surface. Our own outer agenda looms

larger than our desire to be with God in silence. And as the silence settles in and nothing seems to be happening, we often struggle with the feeling that we are wasting time. Everything we notice in this struggle can become an invitation to prayer. Like a can opener the silence opens up the contents of our heart, allowing us deeper access to God than we experience at other times. As we remain in the silence, the inner noise and chaos will begin to settle. Our capacity to open up wider and wider to God grows. The holy One has access to places we don't even know exist in the midst of the hubbub.

Jesus told his disciples, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear" (John 16:12). It is Holy Spirit's job to keep the inner process of revelation underway. But in order for the Spirit to do his job, we need to cooperate and put ourselves in a place to deeply and reflectively listen. Be alone with God in the silence. Offer your body and your attention to God as a prayer.

As you quietly offer your body you can hone your listening reflexes. There is nothing you need to do here. This is not a time to come up with strategies for fixing your life. Silence is a time to rest in God. Lean into God, trusting that being with him in silence will loosen your rootedness in the world and plant you by streams of living water. It can form your life even if it doesn't solve your life. The anonymous author of *The Way of the Pilgrim* wrote, "I need peace and silence to give free play to this quickening flame of prayer." Let the silence lead you to prayer.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In Revelation 8:1 we read that there was "silence in heaven for about half an hour." What might be going on in heaven's silence?
2. How do you avoid or resist silence?
3. Do you like to fill silences with sound or learning—tapes, talk shows, news and so forth? What does this mean?
4. Where do you have silence with God in your life?
5. How much time each day do you give to silence (i.e., no words, printed or audible)?
6. Do you think God values time with you in silence? Explain.

SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

1. If silence is new for you, begin with ten minutes. Setting a timer can help a novice who keeps watching the clock. The timer lets you forget the time and settle into the quiet. Intentionally place yourself in the presence of God and become quiet. • As you become quiet what do you hear: voices, traffic, your breath, wind, your heart, distracting thoughts? Let the noise go. Continue to let the quiet deepen. Be with God. • After ten minutes, reflect on what it was like for you to simply become still enough to hear the background. • Try this several times a day. What happens to you? The benefits of being silent are often seen in the fruit it bears rather than in the experience of silence per se.

2. While doing a task, turn off any background noise and continue the task by offering it to God. Be in the present, doing what you are doing with a listening heart. • What is it like for you? • What distracts you?
3. Go into silence. Begin to meditate on Psalm 37:4—"Delight yourself in the LORD / and he will give you the desires of your heart." What does this verse say to you? • What desires has God put into your heart? What does God say to you about your desires? • Stay and wait. Ask for the freedom to delight in God and for ability to know and live out your God-given desires.
4. Go into silence, placing yourself in the presence of God with the words "Here I am." • As distractions come to mind, let them go by imagining they are boats floating down a river. Let the current take the distractions away. Don't follow the distractions. Gently return to God repeating "Here I am." Let the current of God's Spirit carry you. • What is this like for you?
5. Spend a half day in silence: no books (other than the Bible), no music, just listen. What surfaces? • How do you want to interact with God about his gift of silence? (See the appendix "Spending Time with God.")
6. If you struggle with silent time, bring a timer with you to prayer. Sit in a quiet and comfortable place where you can attend to the Lord. Take some deep breaths, relaxing your body and quieting your mind. • Put the timer on one minute. Become still before the Lord. When a distracting thought comes to mind, count it, but drop it into the river of God's peace. Let it float down the river. Count each thought that comes up and let it float down river. After one minute, how many thoughts have gone through your mind? • Set the timer for another minute. Repeat the same exercise. How many thoughts went through your mind this time? • Repeat the exercise one more time. Ride the river of God. • What do you find out about quieting your soul? • What was it like for you to do this? It takes time to quiet your thoughts; don't become discouraged. Practice will help you learn how to best quiet yourself.

Resources on Silence

Invitation to Solitude and Silence by Ruth Haley Barton

The Awakened Heart by Gerald May