



PRAYER & FASTING GUIDE

Wednesday, October 6th

Today's prayer guide was written by Joshua Solowey, our Hillsboro Village Campus Pastor.

"Peace! Be Still!" Mark 4:39

Jesus has a way of simply and concisely saying things, doesn't He? The disciples are out at sea, the storm that was at a distance has now come close. Stewing in their powerlessness, they turn to their instincts...they freak out. They look to each other and quickly realize that the answer to their new problem (mother nature showing her ugly side at sea) does not lie within their fellow comrades. In my head they all look at each other in deep fear, share the epiphany of "we are hopeless" and collectively turn their heads to their sleepy friend who might just have a way out of this mess. They turn to Jesus.

There is a chance you have read this story and have heard it preached. If you grew up going to church, you may have already stopped reading because of how common it is to read a blog about Jesus calming the storms. But hear me out. I don't plan on unpacking this story to talk about the storms in your life (although this story is RICH for that conversation). I just found myself getting stuck on the simple command from Jesus: Peace. Be Still.

Let's chase a tangent for a moment :)

Jesus says first, "Peace!" That is the main order given. Then Jesus gets specific, "Be still." In case the storm was struggling to understand the command, Jesus helps with a practical step. Basically, "Hey storm, when I say "peace" what I mean is stop moving around, stop raining, stop blowing wind, be completely still." The storm is not ambiguous in its understanding. Jesus has made it plain.

Whereas Jesus says first, "Peace" and then secondly, "Be still." the enemy and our culture work against peace in reverse order. Before our peace can be targeted, I think it often starts with our stillness...or lack thereof.

I'll speak for myself here. It seems the current of culture speeds up to a pace I was not designed to move at. Whether we are talking my weekly calendar (friends, work, meetings, weddings, birthdays, obligations, etc) or my brains default setting (mental scrolling, checklists, spinning several plates at once, zoning out on social media or tv), I have found the magnetic pull of movement (aka chaos) in my life to be strong. *I do not default to stillness, I default to movement.*

This, in my opinion, has a trickle effect. Over time, a hurried, busy, and/or chaotic life becomes default. It moves from my calendar into my mind, from my mind into my heart. I slowly become someone who cannot "Be still." Even on good days, I have a tendency to find a problem to solve or a thing to entertain me because I have trained myself that stillness is not an option. While I would never sit there and say the phrase, "stillness is not an option!" I live as if it's my personal creed or life motto.



What about you? Have you ever tried to sit down on your bed or couch for 5 straight minutes? No phone, no book, no pen and paper, no anything. Just....stillness. Like water starting to simmer before it boils you feel your distractions and anxiousness within the first minute. Suddenly you are staring down the barrel of 4 more minutes of stillness and it feels impossible. Is that you? Maybe, maybe not. It certainly can be me more often than I'd like to confess. This begs the question, could stillness play a key role in a life marked by peace?

My answer is simply yes. I have noticed that something happens in stillness. When I choose to sit, be still, breath, and be. What happens next can be somewhat unpredictable. Let me list a few examples from my own life. Sometimes, upon sitting still for a few minutes, I will...

- Start crying. I will realize I have had a stress on my shoulders that I have blatantly ignored because I just needed to survive the current season
- Be overwhelmed with feelings of gratitude for the people in my life I love
- Notice some of the conversations I had recently and see how God was actually connecting some things in my life that I might have missed otherwise.
- Begin to worship God as I notice the creation around me
- Become aware of some anger, frustration, and doubt that has been actively disrupting my heart but way down deep so I didn't notice in my day to day routines
- Start to breath slowly and feel some stress immediately going away as my stillness pushes back against my false sense of urgency
- Be super distracted (I needed to make sure I threw that in there, I am human and this is normal)

That list is basically me saying this: Stillness often helps you hear your soul. If this is the case, then it is safe to assume that God has made us to be still. Not only that, but I strongly believe God wants to join us in the stillness. To commune with us there. Psalm 46:9-10 says, "He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" This Psalm tells us that it is in the stillness that we acknowledge God Himself.

When you invite the presence of God into the stillness, I believe it can (and will) be transformational. When we allow God in on this process, we give Him access to our souls, our worship, our anxious thoughts, our frustration, our gratitude, our distraction.

When God's presence meets your stillness, over time, the peace of God that "surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4)

As you pray and fast, I invite you into an exercise of stillness. Find a place to physically be still for an extended period. Remove any potential distractions. Breath deep. Remain steady. In the stillness, pay attention to what bubbles up. Whatever it is, invite God into the dialogue. I believe the Holy Spirit will use your stillness to reveal things to you. Things you care about, things that excite you, frustrate you, encourage you, anger you, etc. What better place to process these things than in the presence of God Himself?

Today, let Jesus speak to your soul, "Peace! Be still!"