

“Happy Journaling!”

August 9th, 2020 Covid 21
Psalm 46

Lynn McCaw
Wall Street United Virtual Church

Happy Sunday to all the Wall Street United Church family and to other friends watching. My name is Lynn McCaw. I'm a member at Wall Street and in the process of taking the Licensed Lay Worship Leaders course. I'm here filling in for our Pastor - Reverend Kimberly Heath as she's away on a much needed vacation.

Scripture today from Psalm 46 - The Passion Translation

God, you're a safe and powerful place to find refuge! You're a proven help in time of trouble, more than enough and always available whenever I need you. So we will never fear even if every structure of support were to crumble away. We will not fear even when the earth quakes and shakes, moving mountains and casting them into the sea. For the raging roar of storms and winds and crashing waves cannot erode our faith in you. God has a constantly flowing river whose sparkling streams bring joy and delight to his people. Everyone look! Come and see the breathtaking wonder of our God. For he brings both ruin and revival. He's the one who makes conflicts END though out the earth, breaking and burning ever weapon of war. Surrender your anxiety! Be silent and stop your striving and you will see that I am God. I am the God above all nations and I will be exalted throughout the whole earth.”

Be silent and stop your striving and you will see that I am God. Be silent....I have to say that silence is something I don't practice enough of. I like listening to all kinds of podcasts, videos, music, radio shows and television. It's company for me as I work around the house or when I'm driving somewhere. Yet there are times when I take the time, make the time to sit and spend time with God. And they're good times. Times when I turn off the devices and sit in silence. Times when I'm not striving.

Here's a quote from one of my favorite philosophers, Winnie the Pooh... “Doing nothing leads to the very best of something”. I was struck when I heard this and thought how very true it was.

Most of us are not very good at doing nothing. So when we do, we zone out, disengage or go to sleep. Usually because we've been doing so much we're tired. But as Winnie says *doing nothing can lead to the very best something*. By that I mean be silent and stop your striving and you will see that I am God.

None of us have relationships, close friendships without spending time with the other person. There are many different types and levels of relationships. The closest ones to us are the ones we spend time with. We discuss what's happening in our lives, our hopes and dreams, our innermost thoughts and feelings with each other. We learn each other's likes and dislikes, their moods, what feeds them, excites them, gives them life.

This is what God desires of us. To partner with us. To do life with us. And here's the thing - We're already halfway there. You see God being one half of the relationship already knows us because he made us. So it's up to us to make the effort to get to know God.

In Phil 4:6-7 it says *“be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”* Petition is asking God for things - for help, healing, protection that sort of thing. So petition is prayer, and as we've heard it's good to bring petitions to God, but all prayer is not petition.

Here is what a phone call would sound like with this kind of one sided conversation:



Person you are calling: *“Hello?”*

Caller: *“Hi! How are you today? Just wanted to touch base with you and let you know I could use some help with a few things. Things have been chaotic lately. The kids are having a rough go of it. The dog has been sick. My back has been killing me. So thanks for your help. Good to talk to you. Bye.”*

Well, I guess that was letting your petitions be known! (But that does not let the other person get a word in at all! ☺) I'm not belittling this because God hears our hearts when we ask and God wants us to ask. But much of our prayer life seems to be like a one way conversation...where we give a list of things where we want God to help us.

What about the relationship part? How do we do that? I said earlier that God wants to partner with us; to do life with us. So how do we do that? We just talk. We share our joys and our troubles. Our feelings. Whatever is going on in our lives. And remember, God knows you better than you know yourself so nothing you say will be a surprise or a shock.

There are many of us who spend time in the morning with God in prayer. Then when we go to bed we take a little time to “finish up our day”. But what about the in between time throughout our day? Where else can we pray and connect with God?

How about while doing dishes?
Or maybe in the shower?



Or when we finally sit down to
relax?

So the answer is – anytime,
anywhere. Just talk to God. He's
waiting for you.



I would like to tell you about what really works for me. It's journaling and more specifically...two way journaling. It's been life changing for me in hearing God's voice. As a matter of fact it's why I'm here doing this today.

You see a couple of summers ago my Pastor; Pastor Kim was talking to me and told me that there was a course available to become a Lay Licensed Worship Leader and would I be interested? There was no hesitation on my part as I immediately replied, "Nope! Not interested!" As I was quickly retreating out of her office to get away from further conversation about this, she followed me and asked me if I would pray about it. I said I would, but thinking to myself 'it's not going to happen'.

You see I'd much rather work behind the scenes. Praying or doing whatever I can to help. I have been terrified of public speaking all my life. I'm an introvert. I don't like to be out in front.

So fast forward to the following February. I'm cleaning out a magazine holder to take to recycling and I find a spiral notebook. The kind I use for journaling. I put it aside and planned to look at it later that evening. I totally forgot about it until I spied it sitting there waiting for me. I snatched it up and opened it randomly and started reading my previous (2 way) conversation with God. Closer to the end I find this: *"Oh and by the way, Pastor Kim asked me to pray about this course. What do you think?"*

I was totally gobsmacked by the words that followed. *'You should take it. It will only help you.'*

What!? I wrote this and yet had no recollection of it what so ever! And here it is coming back to me after 6 months?! So I'm supposed to take the course!?

Then the reasons 'why not' started coming. I'm too old, I haven't taken formal educational courses in many years and I never was the brightest student, and I'd have to come up with the course fees! Everything and anything to say why I shouldn't take the course.

So I get the bright idea of messaging and running this by a very wise Pastor whose insight and God gifting I trust as well as Pastor Kim's. He asked for time to pray before responding. Fair enough; wise answer. A day

or so later he messaged me back that he had a dream. Uh, oh! In the dream he said we were having a picnic to celebrate you completing the course. Well rats! Between Pastor Kim's nudge, finding the journaling and the this dream; I'm thinking it's time to resign myself; bite the bullet so speak, and follow what God's leading me to do.

So I look up course registration on line - and it says registration is closed for this unit. Now I know I'm supposed to take the course, I'm not about to let it drop so easily. I find a phone number on the site and call. I didn't realize it was a cell phone number. A kind voice answered and I was speaking with the man in charge of registration who was at that moment in a Costco store shopping for his congregation's Shrove Tuesday dinner. Oh dear! I didn't mean to interrupt. He assured me it wasn't a problem and yes I could still register. Hallelujah! Maybe? After now, after just completing my 3rd unit out of 4, I can honestly say it's one of the best decisions I've ever made. Apparently God was right all along.

So I know, now that you've heard this you will really want to learn how to 2 way journal for yourselves, to help you hear better what God is speaking to you. God is always speaking to us in many different ways. This is just one of the ways I've found that make it easier and clearer.

First - you quiet yourself down - find a comfortable spot and relax

Second - fix your eyes on Jesus - picture Jesus in your mind in whatever setting you prefer

Third - tune to spontaneity - that's the Holy Spirit talking to you - the thoughts or pictures that come into your mind

Fourth - write - write out what you're hearing or seeing

Now you may think these are your own thoughts or imaginations but keep working with it and you'll find it's quite remarkable because things that come out are things you've never thought of before

Just a word of caution. There are 2 other voices we might possibly hear as well. One is our own expressing our own soulish thoughts or desires. For example if you are looking for direction on buying a new vehicle and you have 4 kids and 2 dogs and you're seeing yourself in a 2 seater sports car...well that's probably you.

The other voice you can immediately identify is one that will be very negative. If you hear something like - who do you think you are believing the God who created the universe would ever speak to a loser like you! - Well that's definitely not God. God is a god of love who greatly desires for you to hear his voice. As Jesus said in John 10:27 *"My sheep hear my voice."*

If you're not quite sure where to start you can try a few simple questions. Like: God, how do you see me? God, if we could play a game together what would it be? Or God, if we could go anywhere in the world together where would we go?

These simple questions may help you to jump start your 2 way journaling. Or you may have questions of your own.

So I encourage you to get your notebooks out and start your journey of 2 Way Journaling.

Remember the 4 points:

1. quiet yourself down
2. fix your eyes on Jesus
3. tune to spontaneity (thoughts that just pop into your head)
4. write them down

As you do this and read your Bible, because God speaks through his word, you will get to know and grow in relationship with the God who loves us unconditionally and forever.

“Doing nothing leads to the very best of something.”

Be silent and stop your striving and you will see that I am God.

Benediction

May the love of God surround you
May the compassion of Jesus fill you
and May the Holy Spirit lead you into all truth
in Jesus name I pray. Amen

Happy Journaling!