



RETREAT OF SILENCE GUIDE JANUARY 2022

Created by Will Truesdell and Modified by Bette Dickinson

INTRODUCTION

These are trying times. Most of us have experienced loss in some way in the past two years due to Covid, or the accompanying unrest in our political, racial and social climate.

Welcome to a day where you can slow down, turn your eyes to Jesus in a non-rushed way, and welcome his presence into your experience from the year. My hope for each of you today is that you would be able to be still and know Jesus closely, in a way that brings refreshment to your whole self. We certainly need this in fresh ways!

This guide will lead you some prayer exercises that will help you lean into these three different areas of our formation. This PDF is prepared for a Retreat of Silence that could last between 2 hours or a full day.

Flow:

I have included a suggested flow for the day that is designed to help you engage with Jesus in meaningful ways. Feel free to use this in a way that works best for you/your time available. I've used a metaphor of baking bread to depict the movements.

Arrival: Getting the Ingredients Ready (30 min)

A time to come to Jesus intentionally – to be aware that we need to let go of some things in order to turn our attention to Jesus and minimize distractions. Like clearing the counters and gathering the ingredients you'll need to make the bread.

Engagement: Work in the Ingredients and Knead (2 hours)

A time to engage prayerfully with Jesus in the scriptures. Like gathering the ingredients, mixing, kneading until everything has been worked in well.

Rest: Let the Dough Rise (1.5 hours)

A time to pause, giving space for the Spirit to speak and move. Like resting the bread dough so that the yeast can do its work.

Respond: Bake (1 hour)

A time to respond to your engagement with Jesus and focus on what he is calling you to do. Like baking the dough so it becomes bread – something you can eat...So, eat it!

Leaving: Break Bread (30 min)

A time to hold what Jesus has done and return to daily life. Like cleaning up and putting the bread away so you can come back and enjoy the fruit of your work (without having to do the whole process again!)

Arrival



First, if there are any loose ends that you need to attend to, do so as you begin, so you can let them go and focus on this day. Minimize distractions as much as possible - consider putting your phone on airplane mode. Make sure you have some paper, a pen, and your Bibel.

Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit. Sit with both feet flat on the floor, hands resting on your lap. Pay attention to your body. Where in your body are you holding tension? Slowly move your muscles and/or body parts to loosen the tension.

Notice the pattern of your breathing. Gradually take deeper breaths and pay attention to the exhale; blow out your breath. Slow down and simply be with Jesus for as long as it takes for you to be fully present. If it helps, use a breath prayer, like "Lord Jesus... You are always with me," or any prayer of your choice.

If you notice anything distracting or you are "holding on to" as you do this, simply picture Jesus opening his hands to take these things, and entrust them to him.

The Welcoming Prayer



Click [here](#) for the Audio Guide

*Silence means recognizing that my worries can't do much.
Silence means leaving to God what is beyond my reach and capacity.
A moment of silence, even very short,
is like a holy stop,
a sabbatical rest,
a truce of worries.*

Look Back

IN CHRIST - WITH CHRIST - LIKE CHRIST

Think back over the previous months. What are you grateful for? What has been hard? What have been your dominant feelings? As you think on these things, tell Jesus about them as he gives you his full attention.

IN CHRIST - Where have you grown in intimacy with Jesus in this past month?

LIKE CHRIST - How has He been at work to shape you to look more like him?

WITH CHRIST - Where have you seen Him with you on mission - at home, church, or in ministry?

Read Howard Thurman's poem slowly as a prayer.

Lord, Lord, Open unto Me

by Howard Thurman

Open unto me—light for my darkness.

Open unto me—courage for my fear.

Open unto me—hope for my despair.

Open unto me—peace for my turmoil.

Open unto me—joy for my sorrow.

Open unto me—strength for my weakness.

Open unto me—forgiveness for my sins.

Open unto me—tenderness for my toughness.

Open unto me—love for my hates.

Open unto me—Thy self for my self.

Lord, Lord, open unto me!

Which "open unto me" phrase calls out to you the most as you come into this retreat?

Ask Jesus for what you need during this retreat.

Engage

WORK IN THE INGREDIENTS



The scripture for today is the familiar account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. It is an account that is full of emotion, engagement with Jesus, and wonder.

Engage with the scripture with your imagination. If it helps, feel free to do some background study or use study tools (reading Luke 10.38ff can help to understand Mary and Martha).

Focus the bulk of your time entering in the story with your 5 senses. Catch the mood, the emotions, the thoughts – what would it have been like to be there in person?

Read or listen to the account 3 times, slowly, and imagine the experience from the perspective of Mary, Martha, and Jesus in turn.



Mosaic at the Church of St. Lazarus in Bethany



JOHN 11:1-46 (NIV)

11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) 3 So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick."

4 When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days, 7 and then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

8 "But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews there tried to stone you, and yet you are going back?"

9 Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in the daytime will not stumble, for they see by this world's light. 10 It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light."

11 After he had said this, he went on to tell them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

12 His disciples replied, "Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better." 13 Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep.

14 So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, 15 and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

16 Then Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to the rest of the disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

17 On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles[b] from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. 22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

27 "Yes, Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

28 After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. "The Teacher is here," she said, "and is asking for you." 29 When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. 30 Now Jesus had not yet entered the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. 31 When the Jews who had been with Mary in the house, comforting her, noticed how quickly she got up and went out, they followed her, supposing she was going to the tomb to mourn there.

32 When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 34 "Where have you laid him?" he asked.

"Come and see, Lord," they replied.

35 Jesus wept.

36 Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

37 But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"





38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. 39 "Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"

41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

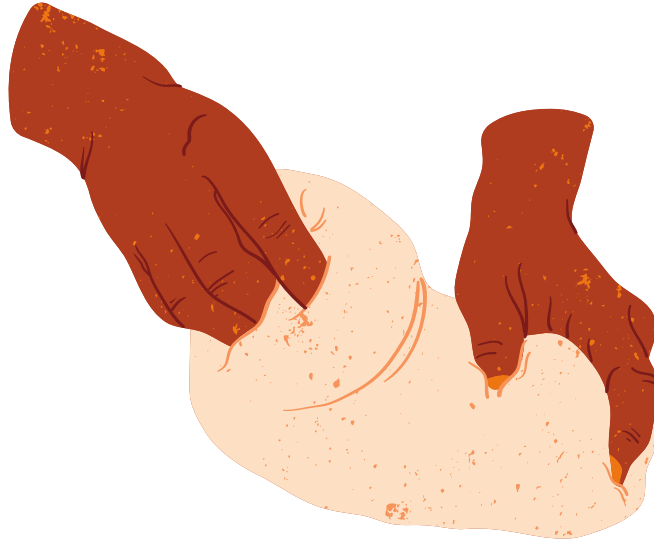
Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

The Plot to Kill Jesus

45 Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. 46 But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done.

Reflect

KNEAD THE DOUGH



1. What are the differences in how Mary and Martha respond to this tragedy? What are the similarities?
2. Imagine the emotional and theological journey that Mary and Martha go on. Put words to their experience. Who do you resonate with, and why?
3. How do you respond to Jesus when you are in pain?
4. What do you notice about how Jesus interacts with Mary? and Martha?
5. Where are you suffering at the moment, or where have you suffered this season? Consider where you have pain, anger, anxiety, etc. Turn to Jesus and be with Him, giving space for him to speak or respond.
6. Where do Jesus' words and actions in this passage bring you comfort and encouragement?

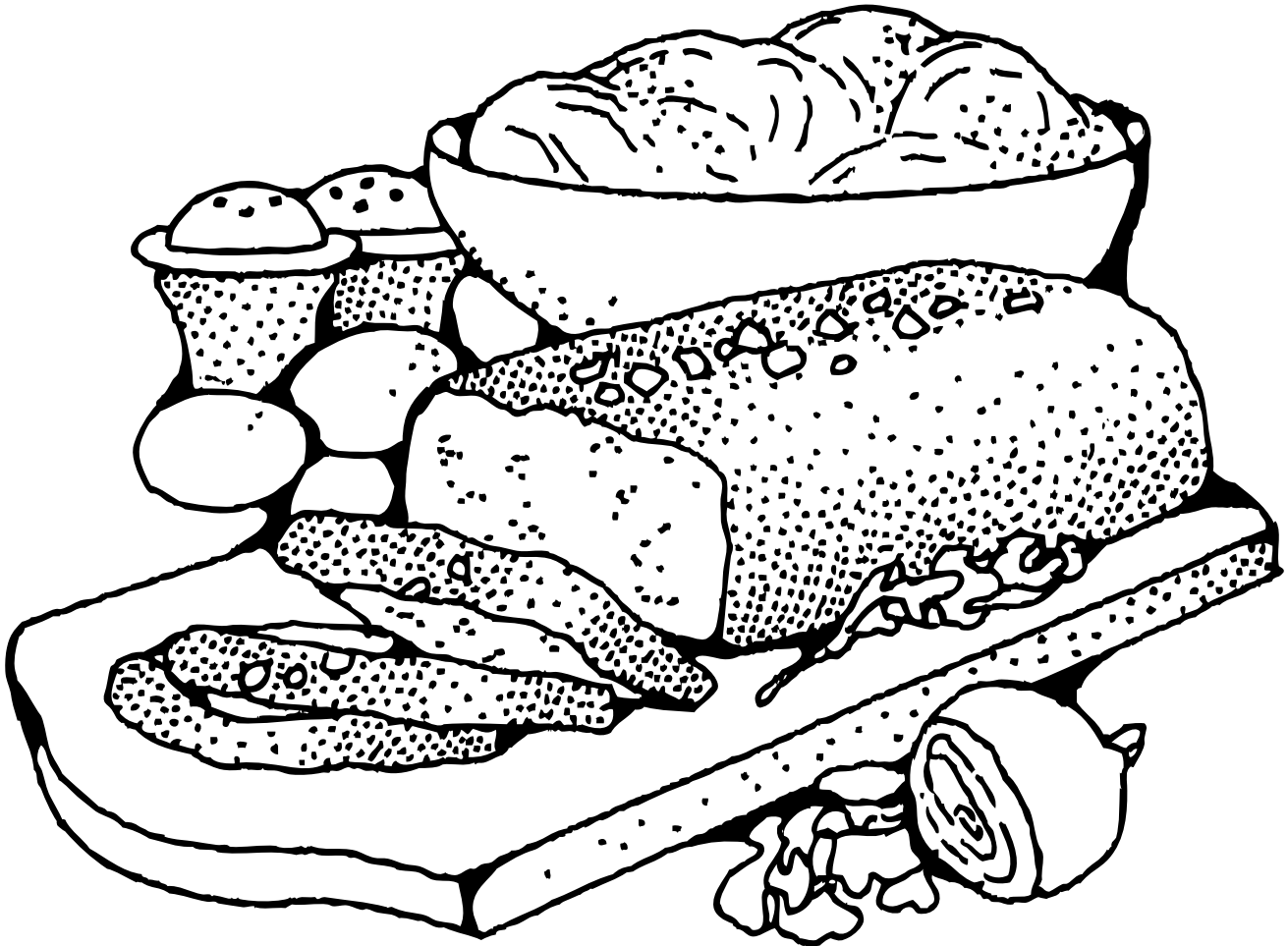
Rest

LET THE DOUGH RISE



- Choose something that is truly restful and refreshing for you.
- It may mean taking a nap, or going for a leisurely walk, reading a good book, eating good food - anything!
- As you do this, be open to the Spirit and his work in you.

coloring page - print and color as a way of prayerful meditation on light (optional)





Respond

BAKE THE BREAD

Revisit your time with Jesus in the scriptures after the time of rest.

1. Where did you sense receptivity to God's word and work in you?
2. Where did you sense resistance?
3. Is there anything new to notice?
4. What truth about Jesus especially stands out to you from today?
5. How would you "sum up" what Jesus is saying or doing in you from the day?
6. Based on this, what might be new or different in the days ahead in your relationship with God, yourself, others, or ministry?
7. Is there a spiritual practice/discipline you can adopt to grow in this?
8. What has he given you in this time that can be a gift to others?

Spend some time prayerfully considering 1 or 2 next steps that you can take to incorporate what you have experienced, heard, or learned today into your ministry or other spheres of life.

Leaving

BREAK BREAD

43 Then Jesus shouted, "Lazarus, come out!" 44 And the dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in graveclothes, his face wrapped in a headcloth. Jesus told them, "Unwrap him and let him go!"

As you finish this day, give thanks for what God has done. Then say the closing prayer out loud, as a way to hold sacred God's work in you.

Closing Prayer

Dear God,
I so much want to be in control
I want to be master of my own destiny.
Still, I know that you are saying:

'Let me take you by the hand and lead you.
Accept my love
And trust that where I will bring you,
The deepest desires of your heart
will be fulfilled.'

Lord, open my hands to receive your gift of love.
Amen
(Henri Nouwen)



Text a Friend

Sometimes it's harder for us to see the slow ripening work that the God is doing in our lives than it is for the people around us. Text 2 or 3 people in your life (maybe a staff friend or a supervisor) and ask them what fruit they are seeing God bring out in you and what fruit God want to nurture in you.