

Immanuel Journaling

By Carolyn Carney, National Director of Spiritual Formation

In this practice, we connect with the God who sees, hears, knows and comes down to us to do something about what we are going through. It is what we read in Exodus 3, when God speaks to Moses from the burning bush. "Then the Lord said, 'I have **observed** the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have **heard** their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I **know** their sufferings, and I **have come down to deliver** them from the Egyptians and **to bring them up** out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...'"

It is from this encounter at the burning bush that we get the six movements of Immanuel Journaling:

1. I see you
2. I hear you
3. I know how hard this is for you
4. I am glad to be with you in this.
5. I can do something about what you are going through
6. This is how I see you moving forward as your best self...

Here is how it works:

1) *I see you.*

Describe the observable facts about where you are, and your surroundings, as if God were describing them back to you. You can also write about your own physiology. This first step might seem superfluous, but it situates you in time and place and allows you to check in you're your body. Write as much as you like.

Examples:

- I see you _____, sitting in your favorite chair.
- I see you looking out the window, with your coffee in hand.
- I see you flipping your pen back and forth, agitated.
- I see you _____ clenching and unclenching your jaw.

2) *I hear you.*

Begin to write about the things you have been saying to others, the words you speak that no one else hears, your private actions. God recognizes what he hears from our inner thoughts. Write as much as you like.

Examples:

- I hear your cries for help.
- _____ I hear the questions you are asking.
- I heard you saying how alone you feel.
- I hear the worry in your voice as you spoke to _____.
- I hear the way you hold back from saying what is really on your heart.
- I hear the deep desires of your heart.

3) *I know how hard this is for you.*

Here is where you connect to the heart of the One who created you, who knows you intimately, who knows your entire story. Here you describe what God sees as why this is so difficult for you.

Examples:

- I know that if this happens to you, you will be at a great loss.
- I know this is hard for you, because it reminds you of that earlier time.
- I understand that this feels unfair to you.
- I know this is hard because you feel you have no one to turn to.
- I understand why this is so big and scary for you. You have never been in this place before and everything is unfamiliar. You are not sure of your footing.

4) *I am glad to be with you in this. Or I choose to be with you here.*

This is a time of contemplation: be present to the One who is present to you. Focus on your breathing for a bit. Exhale that which is difficult; inhale the presence of God who sees, hears and knows and loves that you are turning to him now.

5) *I can do something about what you are going through.*

This is a place of leaning in and listening for what God wants to say to us about this situation. It may be that a Scripture passage comes to mind, the reminder of a dream or promise. Sometimes it's a simple solution or a comforting statement, or as in Moses' situation, the reminder that a friend or family member also cares for you in your situation.

Examples:

- I will not leave you, nor abandon you. I am here. I will remind you of my promises to you. You have always taken solace in hymns. Perhaps you might set aside some time each day to listen to some from the internet or to some recordings. Remember _____? She has gone through something similar. She may be a good companion for you.
- (Perhaps during your listening, an idea came into your mind that you'd not thought about before.) Swimming. Exercising in the water could be helpful.
- My Spirit is the Comforter—my very presence with you. Lean into the Spirit. The spirit will give you words when you have none.
- Know that you are loved. Deeply. You cannot hide from my Spirit. My love for you is not dependent upon your own actions. Just open to it. Receive it. It is yours.

6) *This is how I see you moving forward as your best self...*

This, too, is a listening prayer moment.

Examples:

- Here are the practical ways I see you stepping away from fear into trusting me...
- It is OK for you to stand up for yourself, express your desires, as long as you hold loosely to them, and tightly to me.
- You can take risks in these areas....
- Let go of the outcome in this situation. Your identity is in me not in whether or not you gain success here.