

Flourishing in the Peaceful Season

Still in the New Year

A favorite ritual of mine around Halloween is buying a new planner for the next year to keep track of all my appointments, important dates, and my to-do-lists of all I want to accomplish. There is something about a brand new calendar with every page blank that sets me to work. It doesn't take long for the white to be filled in; gone is the crisp and clean and soon pages are overflowing with the ever growing, never fully completed to-do-lists. In our lives today, it is easy to fill all our hours with busyness and activity. Stillness isn't something we strive for.

One of my favorite verses, that is easier to recite than to actually live out, is Psalm 46:10 which says, ***He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."***

The Hebrew word for still means to sink down, relax, let drop, or be disheartened. We like to be in control, and to figure things out, to know where we're heading, but stillness is letting it all go. In short, stillness can be defined as doing NOTHING! "Still" is the verb in this verse. Ironically, stillness is something.

Stillness is a practice; something that takes effort and intentionality on our part.

God commands us to be still, to cease striving, to stop doing, and simply know He is God. I know, as I type the words, I cringe inside and gulp, "Stop doing?" Yes, God calls us to just be with Him and know Him. Mary, the sister of Lazarus, understood this. In Luke 10:38-42, Martha is busy in the kitchen, busily banging pots and pans, prepping the perfect meal for Jesus and she gets frustrated and down right angry. Why? She is busy doing and vies her sister, Mary, as doing nothing. Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet. When Martha complains to Jesus about Mary's lack of productivity, expecting Jesus to side with her, Jesus chastises Martha and commends Mary: ***"Mary has chosen what is better"*** (Luke 10:42). Jesus acknowledged that Mary's stillness was important and necessary.

Stillness is when you step away from the busy of life and connect with God. We stop our activity, lay aside our agendas and simply sit at our Savior's feet and be with Him.

With a New Year upon us, with the ritual of making resolutions for 2023, goals and dreams of all you want to see take place this year, be sure to add being still before God. We schedule everything else, why not make daily appointments with God? Yes, write the appointments in your calendar, schedule it in your phone, and simply be in God's presence. Still. Quiet (not talking), just being with Him; simply be and let Him speak. May 2023 be the year where we make stillness a regular part of our routine with God.



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Flourishing in Relationships: Conversation Starters

Here are some great conversation starters for the start of a New Year

- ◆ What is one word to describe the last year?
- ◆ What are three things that brought you joy in the last year?
- ◆ What is one thing that gives you hope for the new year?
- ◆ What resolutions, goals or plans do you have for the New Year?
- ◆ If you could learn the answer to one question about your future, what would the question be?
- ◆ What are you reading right now?
- ◆ What new thing do you want to experience, try, or learn this year?
- ◆ How do you organize your day?
- ◆ What are the best things you do every day?
- ◆ How do you care for yourself?
- ◆ If you could change one thing in your life right now, what would it be?
- ◆ When and how do you read the Word of God?

“In the rush and noise of life, as you have intervals, step home within yourself and be still. Wait upon God and feel his good presence: this will carry you through your day’s business.” William Penn

Additional Resources

Check out our website for more resources to help you flourish in the ordinary season:

<https://usw-womensministries.org/>

Bible Study: *Flourishing in the Stillness* is a 4-week Bible study.

Devotional: *Flourishing During the Peaceful Seasons of Life*

Craft Idea: *Finding Your Peace Painting*

Flourishing Story: Captain Sandra Solis shares her story of *Flourishing in the Pause*.

Flourishing in Prayer

Use these prayer prompts to start your New Year off right.

N—“New” (Isaiah 43:18-19). What new thing does the Lord want you to start this year? Is He leading you in a new direction? Is there a new spiritual discipline you want to incorporate into your daily life this year?

E—“Expectations/Experiences” (Psalm 5:3). What expectations do you have for the new year? How can you be more expectant of God working in your life? What do you want to experience this year?

W—“Who” (Matthew 22:37-39). Who do you want in your life this year? Are there relationships that need to be repaired or restored? How do you want to grow closer to God this year?

Y—“Yes/Yield” (Luke 1:38). What is God inviting you to say yes to? Where do you need to yield your plans/agendas/timetables to His?

E—“Exclude” (Psalm 139:23-24). What things do you need to exclude or eliminate from your life this year? What is God telling you to say “no” to?

A—“Attributes” (Galatians 5:22-23, 1 John 2:6). What godly attributes do you want to grow in your life this year?

R—“Repent” (1 John 1:9). What sin do you need to repent of in your life? Rejoice in the forgiveness of sin God offers.





Read what God's Word has to say about peace in this month's reading plan.

Flourishing in the Word

After the hustle and bustle of December, January seems almost slow. Start the New Year off enjoying the stillness that this month brings, and focus on God's peace.

Jan 1	Psalms 4:1-8	Jan 16	Romans 5:1-5
Jan 2	Psalms 29:1-11	Jan 17	Romans 8:1-11
Jan 3	Psalms 34:1-14	Jan 18	Romans 12:9-21
Jan 4	Psalms 37:30-40	Jan 19	Romans 14:13-23
Jan 5	Psalms 85:1-13	Jan 20	Galatians 5:16-26
Jan 6	Psalms 119:161-168	Jan 21	Ephesians 2:11-22
Jan 7	Isaiah 12:1-6	Jan 22	Ephesians 4:1-6
Jan 8	Isaiah 26:1-13	Jan 23	Philippians 4:4-9
Jan 9	Isaiah 32:1-20	Jan 24	Colossians 3:12-17
Jan 10	Isaiah 54:1-10	Jan 25	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24
Jan 11	Isaiah 55:1-13	Jan 26	2 Thessalonians 3:6-16
Jan 12	Mark 4:35-41	Jan 27	Hebrews 12:14-17
Jan 13	John 14:15-31	Jan 28	Hebrews 13:20-21
Jan 14	John 16:25-33	Jan 29	James 3:13-18
Jan 15	John 20:19-31	Jan 30	1 Peter 3:8-12
		Jan 31	1 Peter 5:5-7

Flourishing Ideas from the Territory

Albuquerque, NM took a day trip to Santa Fe to the oldest church in America, the Loretto Chapel, with the wooden staircase built with no nails.

Bozeman, MT have started an outreach to folks living in their RVs. The WM group prepared food and met them where they are at, feeding their bodies and souls.

Flagstaff, AZ women participated in a Thrift Store Crawl, which is where you visit multiple thrift stores. Choose 3-6 different thrift stores and create an outfit (or whatever theme you decide). The idea is you only have \$20 to spend and at each store you can only buy 1 thing to help complete your outfit.

Grand Junction, CO has a WM group that goes out for coffee and fellowship every Sunday after church.

Ogden, UT help put together health kits and dog food bags for the pantry.

Olympia, WA made driftwood sailboats and anchors as they did a program about "Hope in a Storm."

Phoenix Kroc, AZ create and distribute "Blessing Bags" containing hygiene and snack items to the homeless community.

Torrance, CA did "speed friendship" (like speed dating, but with making new friends).

Tucson Amphi, AZ held a WM tea party with a lavender theme.

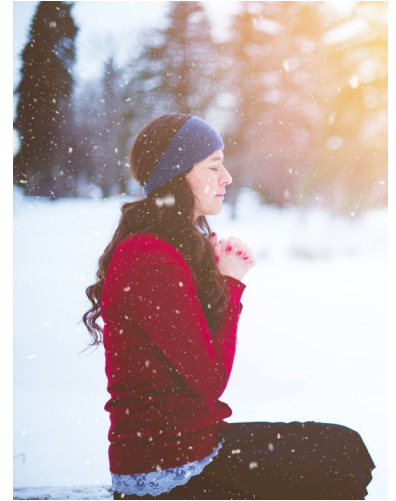
Washougal, WA held a tea Party where each table had a different theme such as Tie Dye, Bees, and more.

Practicing Stillness in Your Daily Life

Jesus made a habit of withdrawing, sometimes abruptly, from the crowd, and His ministry, and went to lonely places to be alone with God. To be more like Jesus we must likewise find times of silence, solitude and stillness.

Stillness is when you step away from the busy of life and connect with God. It's when you slow down for a few minutes and listen—truly listen—for God's voice and will. Here are three ways to help you incorporate stillness into your daily life.

1. Find a quiet place and simply sit in silence with God. Set a timer. Start with 3 minutes and work your way up to 5, 10 or more. Settle into the silence and just listen.
2. Take a walk around your neighborhood in silence. No telephone, no music. Allow your mind to drift into the steady beat of your footsteps and listen to God.
3. Find stillness through art. Color, paint or draw as you pray. Relax into the rhythm of the art process. It is not about the quality of the results, but the quality time with God. Doodle while you pray. Write the name of someone you're praying for. As you doodle around the name hold them close in your heart, lifting them to God.



“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” Isaiah 26:3



Flourishing Fun in January

1. Have an indoor picnic.
2. Have fun in the snow (if you have snow where you live).
3. Make homemade soup.
4. Make your new year bucket list.
5. Put together a puzzle.
6. Read a good book. Join a book club.
7. Shake off the winter blues by dancing it out!
8. Sit by a fire and enjoy hot cocoa, tea or coffee together.
9. Visit a local museum.
10. Write thank you notes for all the cards and gifts you received for Christmas.