

Forgiven, Fearless, & Free

Navigating the River of Life: Salvation to Sanctification

Week 5 Study: Chest-High in the Waters of Life

Fearless: Finding Strength in the Spirit - Part 2

Washing in the water.

Chest-high in the River of Life, we come to recognize our hearts are the problem. Spiritual woundedness and sickness from sin -- both ours and others -- wreaks havoc on our relationship with God and those around us. We are in need of healing.

Hospital zones are quiet zones. Massachusetts General Hospital has an entire guide dedicated to “Addressing Quietness on Units.”¹ In the Introduction, they emphasize the connection between healing and quiet:

A quiet environment offers a healing environment for our patients. Noise is such a stressor for patients that it is proven to be detrimental to their healing process.

This week our spiritual discipline is the discipline of **Silence**. Refusing to contribute to the noise in the world. Refusing to let the noise of the world rule your life and stir up your heart. It’s a way to create negative space to hear God and others. Listen.

For **one day** or at a **specified time of day** for several days, practice the spiritual discipline of silence. **Silence** any media in your life: social media, television, newspapers, magazines. Whatever fills your ears, eyes, and mind with noise. **Silence** your own opinions, take a break from being heard and trust God. Be quiet. Talk only when necessary.

Practicing silence is an exercise in listening.

Listen to your heart.

Listen to those around you.

Listen to God.

*“Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted on the earth!”*

Psalm 46:10 ESV

¹ https://www.mghpcs.org/EED_Portal/Documents/PatExp/ADDRESSING-QUIETNESS.pdf



Wading in the Word.

God's Word reveals the workings of the church and our place in it.

Read the following verses taking note of the individual responsibility and the description of the community.

Ephesians 4:1-6

1Corinthians 12:12-20

1John 4:7-16

Where do you see strength in the Spirit impacted in numbers?

How does the strength of the Spirit from community increase the strength of the individual?

Read and write the verses listed:

Proverbs 27:17

Ecclesiastes 10:10

Both Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are accredited to King Solomon, the wisest man whoever lived or will live. Consider these verses in light of that knowledge.

What is described in these two verses?

How might this look in a relationship?

Look up “sharp” the adjective. From the definition list the potential results from participating in a faith community.



Silence.

Silence yourself. Quiet your ideas, likes, dislikes, hobbies and voice. Let go of your need to be heard. Listen.

When we talk too much or do too much, we get in the way of what God is doing. We become a distraction. As we immerse ourselves in church, we realize that there are culturally accepted practices, Gentile ways of life, that we must set aside. We realize that there are things in this Gentile culture that we grew up in that are extravagantly admired and rewarded by our secularized society but that we must not do. A good thing, said or done in the wrong place or at the wrong time, is a bad thing. Becoming mature “to the measure of the full stature of Christ,” the practice of resurrection, requires a lot of negative space -- a lot of not saying, a lot of not doing.

--Eugene Peterson, *Practice Resurrection*

Silence distractions. Make negative space in your life today.
Hold your tongue. Be still.

Consider how less can become more for yourself and your community.



Remember your story.

Look back on your history with God and His people.

What has your experience been with church? with other Believers?

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Who first took you to church? Was the experience positive or negative?

Are you currently an active member of a church? Why or why not?

What emotions rise when you think about church?

In Psalm 16:3, David sings:

As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.

Do David's words ring true in your heart? Why or why not?

People are broken. Even in the church where God says we are free from sin and made whole, there is plenty to cause us grief as we live in this unique time of the year of the Lord's favor.

Sin both inside and outside the church wounds and sickens us. It can draw us away from God and give us an aversion to church.

Read James 4:7-10

What does it look like for you to draw near to God individually? in community?

What does it look like for you to come clean before God? repent? as an individual? in a community?

What about humbling yourself before the Lord? What does that look like as an individual? in community?

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The NIV translates James 4:10 as, *Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up* (emphasis added).

Look up the word “lift” in a dictionary. Take note of the definitions that catch your attention.

What might it look like for you to be lifted up by God as an individual?

What would it mean for you to be lifted up as a community?

Can you see church as a means to increase your strength in the Spirit? Why or why not?

What could you contribute to the church to increase its capacity to find strength in the Spirit?



Silence.

Silence the opposition: the enemy and your flesh.

My competitors blacken my name, devoutly they pray for ruin.

But I'm deaf and mute to it all, ears shut, mouth shut.

I don't hear a word they say, don't speak a word in response.

What I do, God, is wait for you, wait for my Lord, my God you will answer!

Psalm 38:12-15 The Message

Accusers make themselves heard. They invade your thoughts.

Like Stacy shared in her story, our self is often our harshest critic. Our flesh can be extremely judgmental and graceless.

The enemy, likewise, encourages our inner critic. Chiming in with accusations to stir up shame and fear.

Today, stop listening to the lies of the opposition.
Make yourself deaf and mute to destructive thought patterns.
Refuse to engage them in conversation.
Refuse to listen to them.



Discover God's story.

The Bible is the story of God and how He interacts with His creation to teach, guide, enlighten, and reveal His love. Look for what He says about community.

Read Luke 10:25-37

Why did Jesus tell this parable? What was the setting? What prompted Him to tell this story?

Who are the characters involved in Jesus's parable about loving your neighbor?

For reference, **priests** and **Levites** are listed in the Tyndale Bible Dictionary together. They were servants of God in the Old Testament who fulfilled a variety of essentially religious duties and were equivalent to the clergy of today. Professionals paid for full-time religious work.

Samaritans were regarded by Jews as neither fully Gentile nor fully Jewish (Eerdmans Bible Dictionary). Because of their complicated history, and the split of the Jewish nation after King Solomon's reign, the Samaritans and the Jews were at odds with each other. They were two communities entrenched in conflict.

What lesson is Jesus teaching in this parable?

Do you see the Spirit at work? giving strength? healing? Where?

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Who are you in the story? The lawyer? Someone in the parable?

What is God saying to you through His story?

Where do you see His love?

Hear Him say to you: *Go and do likewise*. How will you respond?



Silence.

Silence your opinion about what is right, wrong, socially acceptable, appropriate, or inappropriate. Silence what you've learned from your family and traditions. Listen for God's judgment of the world in which you live.

With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused.

Ephesians 4:17 NLT

Gentiles are unbelievers. They are the ones who run the world and influence culture through all types of media: news, entertainment, books, magazines, movies, bumper stickers, and t-shirts.

Listen throughout the day for the heart of the message conveyed through culture.

Be alert to what is thoroughly Gentile in nature -- from the attitude of an unbeliever.

Be open to what God says about the way you live. Are you living in line with the culture? Or with God?