



May 2017 – The Invitation
Topic: *Spiritual Formation – Creating Space for God*
May 11, 2017

Join YWAMers around the globe in praying and hearing from God. He is inviting you!



Creating Space for God (Photo credit: Carol Jacobs Carre, Flickr)

Since the beginning of the year the focus of our monthly prayer times has been growth. Last month we prayed about the possible parallel increase in persecution. As we experience both of these realities – an increase in numbers and an increase in trials – it is crucial that we put our roots ever deeper into God.

Silence can be a gift to us in this regard. Silence offers us an opportunity to become more aware of God and more aware of the truth of our own hearts. When things are going well, as when our numbers increase, we are tempted to rely on our own strength. Silence can safeguard us from the pitfall of self-sufficiency by keeping us in touch with our great need for God. And when things are difficult, as when we face trials and persecution, we are tempted to panic and try to save ourselves in our own way. In silence we are reminded of the greatness and nearness of God.

In any case, as YWAMers we are often a people of action and it is easy to find both fulfillment and distraction in our activity. When we practice silence, we make space for God to meet us beyond all possible distractions. God invites us to know Him and, in knowing Him, to know ourselves and to become the God-imagining, God-empowered people He made us to be.

To remain in silence for more than a few minutes can be uncomfortable for us. We are used to noise and chatter and in the quiet we often find our minds buzzing with all sorts of thoughts. In order to make space for God, we encourage you to join us in this month's practice of silence – whether as a community, or individually – trusting that this deep listening will lead to a fresh springing up among us of God's abundant life.



Photo credit: Nick Kenrick, Flickr

Prepare to Spend Time in Silence (for the prayer time facilitator if being facilitated as a group):

The Invitation for May, and the prayer day on May 11, will focus on making space to hear God's voice, listening, and being attentive in silence. Here are some practical tips to help those facilitating the prayer time.

1. Decide ahead of time if you want the group to stay together, doing the same activity, or if you will let individuals choose for themselves which activity in which to engage. This is important in order to save time. If you want to let people choose which activity to do you may want to have the three options written out, either as a PowerPoint slide displayed on a screen or on a handout. If the instructions are only verbal you may have to clarify and explain a few times, which would take away from the amount of time you could spend in silence.
2. As a facilitator please help set the tone of the time by explaining the expectations to the group as you begin. You may want to emphasize the expectation of silence in the room (if you are staying in the same room) or of not talking to each other if the group is going outside. This may be challenging for some.
3. Please be sure to give all the instructions at the beginning of the time of silence in order to avoid interrupting the group with further instructions. Include in the instructions a specific time to gather back together again.
4. Consider ahead of time how you are going to process and receive feedback from the group. We have included some possible processing questions. Decide who will facilitate the processing time and how you will record the feedback.

Spend Time in Silence – The Practice of Silence

Choose an Activity Option:

As part of your time of silence, you are invited to consider one of the following three activities as a way to practice "making space for God." If you are participating with a group, we recommend you all do the same activity so that afterwards you can share together about your experience of God through that activity.

Option A: Take a walk outside, in silence.

Begin by simply noticing how you are feeling physically and being present to the world around you. Practice curiosity and a deep listening to your intuition. Let this time be a journey of the heart, noticing where you are being invited to walk and where to stay for a while. Try to let go of any goals you have for this time (such as to reach a certain

destination). Even if you walk only a few steps and simply notice what you see, that is enough.

After spending time slowing down and being present to what is around you, become aware of any questions or reflections that come to your mind. Each season has its own particular questions to ask: for example, spring might cause you to reflect on the fullness of life and time for play. What draws your attention and what questions does your time outside invite you to ask at this particular time of your life?

Finally, once you have enjoyed this time of reflection, ask yourself how are you moving in this journey of life with God? You might choose to mirror your response in the actual movement of your legs and feet as you walk (if you feel hurt, you might walk with a limp; if you are excited, you might bounce; if you are uncertain, you might mirror that in the way you walk). Then ask, how do you *want* to be moving through life in this season? You could move in that way for a short while. How might God be speaking to you through what this brings to your mind?

Option B. Get comfortable and keep silence wherever you are.

Be sure you have your journal and a pen or pencil. You may want to light a candle as a symbol of God's presence. Get comfortable in your chair, or on the floor. Take a few moments to settle into this time and notice how you are feeling. Pay attention to the part of you that finds silence difficult, and to the part of you that looks forward to being with God in this way.

After spending time slowing down and becoming present to yourself and to God, begin paying attention to what comes to your mind. Are you aware of questions you want to ask the Lord? Is there something going on in your life that the silence offers you an opportunity to think about? You might reflect on how you have been turning towards God in recent times, and how you have been turning away from Him. Speak with Him about this.

In the quiet, you may well find that many random thoughts jump around in your mind, distracting you. If it helps, write down things you need to remember so you can stay focused during this time. Then simply return to an attitude of openness and listening to God. How might He be speaking to you through the things that come to mind? You could journal about this.

Option C. Reflection on a painting.

Finally, you may choose to spend your time in silence considering a painting such as this one, based on the story of Jesus and his disciples in the boat during a storm (Mark 4:35-41).



[<https://news.artnet.com/app/news-upload/2016/06/rembrandt-top.jpg>]

Consider projecting this image so everyone in your group can see it, then settling into a silent time of reflection.

As you first look at the painting, ask yourself these questions:

- What grabs my attention right away?
- How does the scene change for me, as I look at the painting?
- What is surprising to me about the painting? What questions does it raise for me?
- Which of the characters do I most identify with, and why?
- What would it be like to be in the boat in such a storm?

You could also consider reflecting on the following questions:

- What are the storms in my life right now?
- In what ways have I overlooked - or been aware of - Jesus' presence with me?
- What is His invitation to me in those stormy places? And what is my response?

Conclude Your Silence Activity:

In conclusion: Whichever activity you choose, at the end of your time simply express gratitude to God for your awareness of His presence, for what He has revealed to you, and for the grace to move toward Him.

Process Questions as a Group:

Once your time of silence has concluded, here are some questions to help your group to process:

- How was the time of silence and listening different from having a specific topic to pray for?
- What challenges did you experience in the time of silence and listening?
- What insights did you gain from this time of silence?
- How do you think a time of corporate, worldwide silence and listening like this could impact the mission?
- What do you think God thought and felt as we took time around the world to be silent before Him?

Close the Time of Silence:

You may like to use this as a closing prayer:

“Lord, thank you that you are not a silent God. Thank you for your desire to communicate with your children. Please give us patience to wait in silence and the ability to quiet our hearts before you. Please train our ears to hear your voice. Help us to be aware of the noises and distractions in our life that may keep us from being close to you, and give us the grace to be still and know that you are God.”

Take Action:

- Find out more about spiritual formation from YWAMers:
<https://ywammontana.org/spiritual-formation-for-extraverts/>;
<http://www.ywamsalem.org/tag/spiritual-formation/>
- Attend training on spiritual formation: <http://www.ywamseamill.org/spiritual-deepening/>
- Plan another spiritual formation event for your location.
- Share on [facebook.com/youthwithamission](https://www.facebook.com/youthwithamission), post a picture and add a comment about how you prayed.
- Go to twitter.com; search for [#praywithywam](https://twitter.com/hashtag/praywithywam) and tweet about your prayer time/post a picture.
- Send an email to prayer@ywam.org letting us know how you prayed and what God revealed to you.



Christians Persecuted in Egypt on Palm Sunday

How We Prayed

April 2017 – Growth – Persecution

- YWAM Melbourne prayed for our Egyptian brothers and sisters from the Coptic Church after bombs exploded in multiple churches on Palm Sunday.
- YWAM Madison and YWAM Melbourne prayed and invited others to join them through Facebook. YWAMers from Homer, Alaska also posted that they prayed.
- Others posted on Facebook that they prayed specifically for Christians in Nigeria, the Middle East and for the Hazara people group in Central Afghanistan.
- YWAMers at YWAM Europe conference prayed for the nations.



The YWAM Europe meeting in Albania

Future Topics:

June 8, 2017 *Back to Jerusalem*

July 13, 2017 *Two-Thirds-World Workers, Financial Support*
August 10, 2017 *Family, Singles, Marriages*

Don't Miss The Invitation:

- Sign up for prayer updates. Go to ywam.org, find the "Stay Connected" box on the home page, put in your email address and click "Sign Up."
- Download prayer updates in a specific language. Go to ywam.org/theinvitation. (Currently available in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Indonesian, Korean or request other languages.)
- Join the conversation about how God is leading in these prayer times. Comment on the Facebook page on the second Thursday at facebook.com/youthwithamission or on Twitter @ywam, hash tag #praywithywam.
- You can now listen to The Invitation as a podcast. To sign up or listen to past episodes, go to: ywampodcast.net/category/shows/prayer.
- If you sense God giving you a word or a direction for YWAM's prayer, please contact us: prayer@ywam.org.

