

Paying attention – Leader Resource



Exodus 3:1-5 (New International Version)

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up." When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

This retreat was based on material in Ruth Haley Barton's excellent book, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership, Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008)

Turning Aside to Look

There seemed to be a cause and effect relationship between Moses' willingness to pay attention and God's willingness to speak...God spoke because Moses stopped, paused, noticed, turned aside! (2008:61)

How much and how easily do we stop and pay attention to God? Sometimes we allow ourselves to get so busy that there is no time for listening and paying attention.

We long for a word from the Lord. We long for others to hear a word from the Lord.

Solitude brought Moses to a place where he had slowed down enough to pay attention to the bush that was burning in the middle of his own life. At last all other voices had quieted down enough that he could recognise a new Voice calling to him from this very unlikely place. (2008:62)

The practice – “turning aside to look” is a spiritual discipline that sets us up for an encounter with God.

Learning to pay attention and knowing what to pay attention to is a key discipline for leaders... leaders need time in solitude to notice

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes –
The rest sit around it and pluck blackberries.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Seeing the strange, unexpected and out of the ordinary

Noticing what burns within our own heart

Paying attention to the inside

The road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32)

Luke 24: 13 - 32 (New International Version)

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Pay attention to all things burning

Places where God's presence and action is clearly evident, where God is making himself known in surprising ways

Taking off our shoes:

In Western culture, taking off our shoes is often about relaxing, feeling at home, and able to dispense with the trappings we put on when we go out in the world. In the Exodus story the command to "take off your shoes" is about Moses acknowledging he is in the presence of a holy God. The two ideas can work together as we come to prayer. We take off our shoes as "if we are at home" and let God see the real us; at the same time we are aware that we stand on holy ground because we are in the presence of a holy God.

The Prayer of Examen

This is a form of prayer that helps us to notice – to pay attention – to the ordinary, everyday things and notice where God is and what God is doing.

Prayer time

Take some time to pay attention to your life.

Being away from your appointment, your home or your country provides an opportunity for you to reflect on your life in a different way.

Reflect on and pray with the Bible passages from Exodus and Luke and/or using the prayer of examen to look at the last few weeks. Where and how have you experienced God? What have you noticed about yourself in this new experience?

What is God calling you to notice and reflect on?

The practice of paying attention – Participant Resource



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TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES!

Macrina Wiederkehr, *Seasons of Your Heart*

My bare feet walk the earth reverently
for everything keeps crying,

Take off your shoes

The ground you stand on is holy

The ground of your being is holy

When the wind sings through the pines
like a breath of God
awakening you to the sacred present
calling your soul to new insights

Take off your shoes!

When the sun rises above your rooftop
colouring your world with dawn
Be receptive to this awesome beauty
Put on your garment of adoration

Take off your shoes!

When the Red Maple drops its last leaf of summer
wearing its "burning bush" robes no longer
read between its barren branches, and

Take off your shoes!

When sorrow presses close to your heart
begging you to put your trust in God alone
filling you with a quiet knowing
that God's hand is not too short to heal you

Take off your shoes!

When a new person comes into your life

like a mystery about to unfold
and you find yourself marvelling over
the frailty and splendour of every human being

Take off your shoes!

When, during the wee hours of the night
you drive slowly into the new day
and the morning's fog, like angel wings
hovers mysteriously above you

Take off your shoes!

Take off your shoes of distraction
Take off your shoes of ignorance and blindness
Take off your shoes of hurry and worry
Take off anything that prevents you
from being *a child of wonder*.

Take off your shoes;

The ground you stand on is holy.
The ground you are is holy.

Luke 24: 13 - 32 (New International Version)

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days?" "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

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