

Five Senses Mini-Retreat

Touch

Just then a woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years slipped in from behind and lightly touched his robe. She was thinking to herself, "If I can just put a finger on his robe, I'll get well." Jesus turned—caught her at it. Then he reassured her: "Courage, daughter. You took a risk of faith, and now you're well." The woman was well from then on. (Mt 9:20-22 MSG)

And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent word into all that surrounding district and brought to Him all who were sick; and they implored Him that they might just touch the fringe of His cloak; and as many as touched it were cured. (Mt 14:35-36 NASB)

Then one of the angel-seraphs flew to me. He held a live coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with the coal and said, "Look. This coal has touched your lips. Gone your guilt, your sins wiped out." (Is 6:6-8 MSG)

Experience:

Take time exploring again the world around you, going very slowly, very deliberately. Focus in on the small things in nature around you through your sense of touch. Feel the texture, temperature and weight of plants, rocks, water, flowers, whatever you find. Touch the objects using various parts of your body—your fingertips, the back of your hand, your cheek. Close your eyes while doing this, to heighten the sensory experience.

Allow this tactile experience to birth a new prayer in you. Perhaps it will be a prayer of thanksgiving, awe or worship for your Creator God. Notice the immense variety of the created world.

Take time also touching man-made things. What do you notice when you compare those things created by God and those manufactured by man?

Reflect:

How does the sense of touch allow God to speak in fresh ways to you? How does touching make you aware of God's presence?

Journal about your experience.

Smell

Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing. To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume. (2 Cor 2:14-16)

At least there is hope for a tree; if it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant. (Job 14:7-9)

Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (Jn 12:3)

Experience:

Head outside and go for a relaxed walk. As you first step outside, inhale deeply and notice the fresh air entering your nose and filling your lungs. As you walk, continue to breathe deeply and notice any shifts in the scents in the air.

What do you smell? Are they man-made things, or created things?

Stop frequently to sniff, whether it is a tree branch, a flower, fungus, earth, pools of water or anything else that you notice carries a scent. What do the smells remind you of?

Reflect:

Notice the subtlety of different scents. How is God's creative genius displayed through the various smells? What do you perceive of Him through the sense of smell that you have not noticed before?

Pay attention to which smells elicited stronger emotional responses from within you. Ask God where these emotions are arising from. Offer thanks for your ability to smell his wonderfully fragrant world! Pray to be a sweet perfume for Christ.

Journal on your experience.

Taste

Taste and see that the Lord is good. (Ps 34:8)

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! (Ps 119:103)

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight. (Jer 15:16)

The master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." (Jn 2:9-10)

Experience:

Take some time to eat your lunch/snack alone in silence. As you begin to eat, thank God for the food and ask him to speak to you during this meal, even through the very act of eating itself.

Savour each morsel of food. Enjoy the gift of food and your ability to taste and to be satisfied in eating. Note the textures and tastes of each different bite. Eat and drink slowing, enjoying even this act of eating as an act of communing with God.

Reflect:

What do you notice of God's presence as you eat? How does the sense of taste draw you into prayer and worship? As food fills you up, how are you being filled by God today? What are your true hungers? How do your deepest hungers and desires link into God's heart for you? How do you think God wishes to fulfill those desires?

Journal about your thoughts after eating and reflecting on the experience.

Sight

The angel of the Lord appeared to him (Moses) 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." (Ex 3:2-3)

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. (Ps 27:4)

Jesus stopped and called them (two blind men). "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. "Lord", they answered, "we want our sight." Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him. (Mt 20:32-34)

Experience:

Head out of doors. Begin walking and notice the larger landscape where you are. What kind of vista is in front of you? What are the geological features? What plant life do you notice? How about human structures? Speak with God about the environment where you are walking. Ask him what he thinks of this piece of the earth, of this small portion of his larger creation.

Continue walking and look at more of the details around you. Approach those things that grab your attention and look at the details. Notice the structure, the intricacy, the variety of colours and the design of the plant or thing. Pay attention to the things that are beautiful and the things you might not call beautiful. Ask for God's perspective on all the things you see. If you see people, simply observe their activities and interactions. Gaze upon them (don't stare!) as you might imagine God gazes upon them in love. "God made humans in his image reflecting God's very nature" (Gen 9:6) and he can open our eyes to see how those individuals also bear God's fingerprints.

Reflect:

Do you notice your perspective and perceptions of the world shift in any way? What captured your attention? Where did you notice beauty that you have not noticed before? How have you noticed God's hand in a different way through your sense of sight?

Journal on your experience.

Hearing

And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11-13 NLT)

Command the ocean to roar with all of its creatures, and the earth to shout with all of its people. Order the rivers to clap their hands, and all of the hills to sing together. Let them worship the LORD! (Ps 98:7-9 CEV)

By his power and wisdom, God conquered the force of the mighty ocean. The heavens became bright when he breathed, and the escaping sea monster died at the hands of God. These things are merely a whisper of God's power at work. How little we would understand if this whisper ever turned into thunder! (Job 26:12-14 CEV)

Experience:

As you walk outdoors, stand still for a moment, close your eyes and listen. What are the loud noises, those that clamor for your attention? Continue to listen longer and notice the softer, more subtle sounds. Appreciate God's work in creation as well as his work through humankind.

Continue to walk and stop several times to shut your eyes and focus on your sense of hearing. The longer you listen, pay attention to the layers of sound.

Reflect:

What happens within you as you quiet yourself and listen more attentively? Notice what happens to your breathing, your sensations, your thoughts, as you listen more attentively. What might God be saying to you in the loud and quiet sounds you encounter?

Journal about your experience.

Retreat Reflections

Now that you have finished your retreat, take some time to reflect on this time with God. Re-read your journal entries. Take some time to sit with the following questions, journaling your gleanings from this time.

Pay attention to how you felt as you began the retreat, as the retreat was progressing and as it ended. Did you notice any shifts in your feelings throughout the course of the retreat?

What are the ways God met you in this retreat? Did you sense any invitations, encounters or words from God for you? What surprised you? How did God speak to you?

Were there any common threads or themes throughout the retreat, or was each sensory experience unique and different?

Summarize into one statement what this retreat has meant for you.