

# WITH GOD EVERY DAY

A FLEXIBLE

FRAMEWORK

FOR SPIRITUAL

PRACTICE

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FOREWORD BY ED STETZER



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## STEP

1

# HOW CAN I BE STILL AND WORSHIP?

RECENTLY I WAS SITTING with my son on the couch, and he glanced over my shoulder while I was adding a meeting to my phone's calendar.

“Wow! Mom, your calendar is so full. That's crazy!” he said.

Simultaneously, two warring feelings surfaced. While I am not proud to admit this, the first feeling was pride. If my schedule is busy, that must mean I'm needed and important. People depend on me. I matter, right?

Like many of us, I sometimes mistakenly equate my busyness with my value. If I'm not mindful of the temptation, I can feel my own self-worth increase as the number of tasks on my calendar rises. Who we are can easily get tied up in what we can do and what we can produce. That's a common lie in our modern culture.

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The second feeling that came up for me was dread. Just looking at everything that I had already committed my time and attention to overwhelmed me. I started to wonder how on earth I could possibly get everything done or where I could carve out time for myself and my relationships. Then anxious thoughts rose to the surface of my soul as I considered what would have to be sacrificed for this busy schedule to be lived out.

Like me, maybe you've had days when you prayed God would do a miracle and make the clock stand still so that you could do all that you've planned to do. We live in a culture that is incredibly fast paced. Not only that, but there is also this impossible superhuman expectation to have it all, do it all, and be it all. We're caught in a current of busyness that constantly pulls us in and pulls us under.

Theologian and philosopher Dallas Willard is credited with saying, "Busyness is the enemy of spirituality" and "Hurry is the great enemy of spiritual life in our day."<sup>1</sup> I feel the reality of each of these phrases deep in my bones. Do you?

We've got busy schedules. Our lives are full. Our tasks list feels unending. There is always pressure to do, go, be, have, and accomplish more. We feel the effect in our bodies, our minds, and also deep in our soul. We're living in a way that has us distracted, detached, and disillusioned.

Busyness and hurry are two of the biggest roadblocks to the deeper, richer, more connected life with God that we all long for. I've talked to parents, students, pastors, teachers, people in the business world, and others from countless walks of

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life, and they all have one thing in common: They admit that carving out time to engage with God is extremely challenging because of how full their lives are.

### A BETTER WAY

How do we overcome the soul-damaging and relationship-killing pattern of busyness in our lives? God gives us one simple and powerful command that acts like an antidote for our hurry sickness: “Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth” (Psalm 46:10).

If you just rolled your eyes and huffed out a sigh because we just spent the last few minutes establishing the fact that our schedules are too crazy to be still, I totally get it. I huffed out a sigh even as I wrote it. It sounds both incredibly simple and insanely impossible to just be still and know that God is God.

But when I feel like I can't pause from the busyness of my own life to engage with God, I am in a place that is dangerous for my soul. I am saying that I'm in charge of keeping everything going, not God. I am declaring that without me, everything will fall apart.

Being still goes against everything in us that wants to strive for success and control. Stillness is countercultural, and it goes against our own human nature. My feelings of pride and dread echo the lie that my life is all about me and that the responsibility for it falls entirely on me.

This invitation isn't meant to be demeaning; rather, it serves as a message offering relief from burdens we aren't meant to

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carry. The weight of this world and the responsibility to keep it all spinning isn't on our shoulders; we can't carry that kind of weight, and we weren't meant to. Acknowledging God as sovereign gives us permission to be human, to be finite, and to rest in his power and presence.

Being still and letting God be God is the first step in the With God Everyday Practice because it immediately reorients everything for us. Being still dethrones us and puts God on the throne of our life and of our day. It gives us a truer perspective and lays the foundation we need for every other step of this practice.

The author of Psalm 63 writes this:

O God, you are my God;  
I earnestly search for you.  
My soul thirsts for you;  
my whole body longs for you  
in this parched and weary land  
where there is no water.  
I have seen you in your sanctuary  
and gazed upon your power and glory.  
Your unfailing love is better than life itself;  
how I praise you!  
I will praise you as long as I live,  
lifting up my hands to you in prayer.  
(Psalm 63:1-4 NLT)

Like the psalmist, we must take our eyes off ourselves and recognize that God is God. We have to willingly acknowledge who God is and what he's done in us, in our lives, and in the

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world around us. We choose to be intentional by pausing from the busyness around us and calling our hearts into a posture of worship. We rightly proclaim that God alone is on the throne of our lives. He is worthy of all honor, all glory, and all praise. From this position, the pressure we feel fades to the background, and God's presence and power move to the foreground. When we still ourselves and fix our eyes on the One who really holds it all together and keeps the world spinning, we receive a perspective that offers us peace for the frantic pace of our lives.

### **SILENCE, SOLITUDE, AND WORSHIP**

Being still involves quieting our heart and mind as we spend time alone with God. That act of silence and solitude paired with the discipline of reorienting our heart to worship does something to our heart, mind, soul, and body: It shapes who we become, but so does *not* taking time to sit in silence, solitude, and worship.

John Mark Comer says it this way: “If your emotional life is off kilter, if you feel far from God, stressed, anxious, and chronically mad, and you’re not becoming more a person of love, then the odds are that something about the system of your life is poorly designed. Because your life is the product of your lifestyle.”<sup>2</sup>

When our life is too busy to engage with God by being still and worshipping him, we feel it in the core of who we are, and we sense it in how we live. The way we order our days, the things we give our time and energy to, where we invest our

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resources—these things shape us and contribute to who we are and who we are becoming. When we pause and give our attention to God, we often see that our busyness has abated and our chaos has calmed. Peace moves in as anxiety moves out. Our gaze moves away from our own self-importance and comes to rest entirely on God’s power and presence. The simple daily habit of being still and worshiping refreshes us and restores our perspective.

I wonder if that’s why Jesus so often prioritized time alone with God to pray and worship. We see regularly throughout the Gospels that he withdrew to quiet places to refresh his soul and spend time with the Father so that he could stay focused on God’s will and God’s way. The Gospels are replete with glimpses of Jesus going away to a still, quiet place to worship.<sup>3</sup>

Before he began his public ministry, Jesus withdrew from the chaos, went into the wilderness, and chose to still himself before God (Luke 4:1). Before he chose his disciples, Jesus went to a mountainside to be alone with God and talk with him in prayer (Luke 6:12). Before he was arrested, Jesus took his disciples to the Mount of Olives and instructed them to pray while he spent time alone with God in solitude and silence (Luke 22:39-41).

In fact, Luke 5:16 says that “Jesus *often* withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (emphasis added). We can assume, because it was his custom and the custom of his people, that his prayer included worship. If this habit of being still and worshiping was a part of Jesus’ regular spiritual disciplines, then we can benefit from building it into ours too.

## How Can I Be Still and Worship?

Notice that in several of the verses listed above it says that Jesus often withdrew and prayed before he did things. It is life changing to begin each day by pausing from the busyness of our lives and praising God. Orienting ourselves toward God and recognizing who he is and what he's done for us can change the posture of our heart and the trajectory of our day. Our love for God grows as we continually remind ourselves of all of the things that make him worthy of our praise and adoration.

We see this in real life all of the time with people who are falling in love. They spend countless hours just sitting and thinking of all of the wonderful characteristics and qualities the person they are drawn to possesses. The more they think about the person, the fonder their heart grows for that person.

We can choose that same kind of intentional adoration to turn our hearts more fully to God. As we think on who he is, what he's done, and what he promises to do, we can't help but love him more because he is abundantly greater than we can imagine (Ephesians 3:20). In his goodness, God meets us in our worship and continues to draw our heart to his.

### **LEARNING TO BUILD A HABIT OF WITH-NESS**

Even though I know the incredible blessing that comes from spending time alone with God early in the morning, sometimes I still struggle to do it. I've had to become very intentional about setting aside time for God, because left to my own natural tendencies, I won't choose to be still and worship. I will instead choose to be distracted by my snooze button, the

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texts and emails on my phone, morning chores, or the various other tasks that can consume our mornings.

So how have I become intentional about overcoming my natural tendency to be busy and distracted? When my alarm goes off, I fight the urge to look at my phone for anything other than turning off my alarm. No checking texts. No checking emails. No looking at social media. No screens to start the day.

Why? Because the minute I do any of those things, I start the anxiety spin cycle that says I need to get things under control before they get out of control. Instead, I begin my mornings with a simple prayer: “Good morning, God. Thank you for another day. All that I am and all that I have is yours. Use this day and use me for your honor and glory. Amen.”

I throw back the plush pile of blankets and grab the robe and slippers lying beside my bed. I slowly make my way to the kitchen to hunt down a steaming mug of coffee. I stumble to my library, squint as I click the lights on, and then nestle into my chair. I pull my Bible, journal, and a pen from the basket by my chair and sleepily scratch the date across the top right margin of the page. On the left side, I write: *1. How can I be still and worship?*

Before my first cup of coffee has even had a chance to fully work its magic, I am intentionally choosing to dethrone myself and enthrone the rightful King and Lord of my life. I am turning my attention toward worshiping the One who is over all, through all, and in all (Ephesians 4:6). God is faithful to meet me when I take this humble posture, and he reminds me of his power and presence. In his goodness he ushers me

## How Can I Be Still and Worship?

into a position of peace that comes from knowing he is God and I am not. As I worship, he draws me nearer. He stirs up love in my heart as I consider all that he is. My heart, mind, soul, and strength are renewed, and I am refreshed.

### THE PRACTICE

I've introduced you to the why behind step one of the With God Everyday Practice, so now I'm going to invite you to practice this first step. Step by step, we will move together through this whole practice. I'll also show you some ways to customize each step. (You'll find those under the next step along with an option to use the Ten-Minute Version of the With God Everyday Practice.)

So let's begin. Grab your journal and write the date in the top right margin. On the left side, write this down: *1. How can I be still and worship?*

Next, take a few minutes to actually be still. It seems simple, but this is more challenging than it sounds. Allow your soul to catch up to your body. Breathe. Maybe do a few slow in-hales and ex-hales. Give yourself a moment to just be present with God and acknowledge his presence with you. Rest in the fact that the God who holds the world in his hands is right now also holding *you* in his hands. If your attention wanders, gently return to just being with God.

After a few moments have passed, take time to worship. I tend to do this in the form of writing a letter to God in my journal under the heading for step one. I just list some characteristics or attributes about God that I love—like those who

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are falling in love do. It often starts with something like, “God, thank you that you are here, present with me. Thank you for your love. Thank you that you hear me when I talk to you. You always listen, pay attention to me, and respond to me. You are so good. Even though you are the Creator and Sustainer of all things, you love me. God, thank you that you are . . .”

Maybe this little love letter to God feels like something that might work for you. It’s the way of engaging this practice that I most often return to, but you might also want to try a method that was taught to me by my friend and fellow author, Becky Harling. Becky came to Missouri to lead one of our annual INSPIRE Heart Retreats, and during that weekend she shared a practice she calls praising through the alphabet. Becky has also written about this in her book *The Thirty-Day Praise Challenge*.<sup>4</sup>

She told us that focusing her attention on God through a worship practice based on alphabetically listing God’s attributes helped her endure her battle with cancer by shifting her perspective to the One who was in control. I love using this method as a way to praise, and I often share it with others; a brief summary of it is listed below.

Feel free to try whichever of these two practices you’re drawn to, or try one of the others listed as well. You can also get creative and come up with your own way to be still and worship. Do whatever feels most meaningful and authentic to you.

Finally, you’ll find a QR code at the end of each chapter that will take you to a short video from me where I share some bonus content and invite you to join me in my daily practice.

.....

**PERSONALIZING STEP 1:**  
**How Can I Be Still and Worship?**



*Scan this QR code to join me as I share my daily practice and a few additional thoughts with you about how you might adapt yours.*

**CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER**

Contemplative prayer is a kind of prayer where silence, solitude, and worship are intentionally engaged for a certain amount of time. I like to set a timer on my phone for a specific amount of time, say, three to five minutes, and then use that time to focus on one attribute of God as I sit quietly with him. If your mind wanders, gently guide it back to that one attribute. When the timer goes off, thank God for personifying that single attribute.

**ABCS OF PRAISE**

Work your way through the whole alphabet, one letter at a time, and praise God for his attributes, naming one attribute for each letter. It could go something like this: *A*—God, you are awesome; *B*—God, you are benevolent; *C*—God, you are the Creator; etc.

**LISTEN TO WORSHIP MUSIC**

Curate a playlist of your favorite worship music. You might even consider choosing a theme that speaks into your current season of life. For example, you might have a playlist on

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overcoming fear, resting on God's promises, or experiencing God's presence. Each morning, after taking a few moments to be still, choose a song from your playlist to listen to.

### WORSHIP THROUGH CREATION

Take a minute and go outside. Watch the sun rise, look at a beautiful tree, observe the clouds—focus on whatever speaks to you about God's creative nature. As you look at it, worship God for his creativity, the beauty he makes, and the gifts he gives his people.

#### TEN-MINUTE VERSION OF THE WITH GOD EVERYDAY PRACTICE: CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

Think about God. What is one characteristic that comes up as you think about him that feels especially meaningful to you right now? Talk to God about why you appreciate that characteristic in him and thank him for showing it in your life. You might ponder characteristics such as loving, merciful, gracious, kind, patient, holy, present, righteous, and so on.

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