

LISTENING ALONGSIDE



ECHOING CHRIST

Lenten Devotions 2017

**Saturday,
April 8, 2017**

The following summary and listening exercise are taken from *Awaken Your Senses: Exercises for Exploring the Wonder of God* by J. Brent Bill and Beth A. Booram.¹

Then the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”
He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid.
I was afraid because I was naked.” Genesis 3:9-10

From a young age, we learn to differentiate footsteps—the telling footsteps of parents, siblings, friends, and teachers. The way we respond to footsteps may depend on the sound they make. If the footsteps are hurried and pounding, we might suspect something is wrong, that we are in trouble, or that someone is in a hurry. If the steps move quietly and stealthily, we might suspect someone is trying to sneak up on us. If we hear casual footsteps of someone we have been anticipating, we feel relief or gladness. Our sense of hearing is remarkable to be able to decode a person’s steps and know his or her identity.

Whose footsteps have you come to recognize without seeing them? How do you feel when you hear those steps? Have you ever wondered if you could hear the footsteps of God?

One day, Adam and Eve heard footsteps in the Garden and recognized them as belonging to God. When God showed up, Adam and Eve recognized the sound of his steps before they ever heard his voice—His movement was familiar to them. This story may provide an analogy of how we recognize God’s figurative footsteps in our lives today.

When have you heard the footsteps of God? In what familiar garden has he invited you to come? In this exercise, you will have a chance to identify memorable places where you have heard God’s footsteps, where he has regularly met you. You will need a piece of blank paper and colored pencils or markers for this exercise.

¹J. Brent Bill and Beth A. Booram, *Awaken Your Senses: Exercises for Exploring the Wonder of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 135-140.

*Begin by drawing a circle or footprint in the center of the page. In the middle, write “Footsteps of God.”

*Begin to brainstorm times and places during your life when you had a profound sense of God’s presence and involvement in your life.

*When you think of one, use a different color and draw a circle or footprint adjacent to the center, connecting it to the center with a line, and write a few words to describe that time or event. If you want to add details to describe the experience—words, Scripture, people, or outcomes—write them in a cluster around the perimeter.

*Continue to do this, filling your paper with as many “gardens” as come to mind and seem significant.

*After you have finished, study your mind map and see if you recognize any discernable pattern to your gardens: are there themes of waiting, loss, missed opportunities, or risk-taking?

How would you describe the footsteps of God in these gardens?

What has become familiar about his presence and movement during these times?

How have you responded to the sound of God’s footsteps?

Have you ever hidden yourself? Why?

What have you learned from returning to these gardens?

How do you hope to respond the next time you hear God’s footsteps?

Prayer

That in the elements of earth, sea, and sky

I may see your beauty.

That in wild winds, birdsong, and silence

I may hear your beauty.

That in the presence of another and the intermingling of relationship

I may touch your beauty.

That in the moisture of the earth and its flowering and fruiting

I may smell your beauty.

That in the flowing waters of springs and streams

I may taste your beauty.

These things I look for this day, O God.

These things I look for.

—J. Phillip Newell

From *Sounds of the Eternal: A Celtic Psalter*

Psalm 63:1-5

You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.
I have seen you in the sanctuary
and beheld your power and your glory.
Because your love is better than life,
my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will lift up my hands.
I will be fully satisfied as with the richest foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Isaiah 43:1-4, 18-19

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
Because you are precious in my sight,
and honored, and I love you.
I give people in return for you,
nations in exchange for your life.

Do not remember the former things,
or consider the things of old.
I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.