

Guided Meditation: Listening

Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.' Then the Lord said to Samuel, 'See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make both ears of anyone who hears of it tingle.

1 Samuel 3.9-11 (NRSV)

My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.
Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

Proverbs 4.1,20-21 (NRSV)

You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face."
Your face, Lord, will I seek.

Psalms 27.11 (Psalter, [US BCP 2006](#))

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Meditation

Take up a posture that is comfortable and close your eyes.
Now become aware of your breathing, of the air as it enters and leaves your nostrils . . .
Do not control your breathing. Do not try to deepen it or change its rhythm. Simply observe your breathing, in and out, in and out . . .
Start specifically to listen to your breathing, in and out, in and out . . .

Now broaden your attention to your surroundings. What can you hear outside of you?
Become aware of the background noises that you often tune out.
Listen to all things equally, letting them arrive in your hearing without judging them . . .
Focus in one direction or on one particular sound. Listen to it for a time . . .
Now turn to another sound and listen to that for a time . . .

Now switch your attention to listening internally. Become aware of any internal chatter.
Observe it for a time, without judging it . . .

Now turn your attention to God's presence and listening to God. Like the boy Samuel in the Temple, say to God in your mind "Speak, for your servant is listening."
God is not a genie that can be summoned to perform for us. But we are learning to cultivate an openness and readiness to listen to the God who is already speaking softly in our hearts.
It may be that God speaks now in words, or through a feeling, or it may be through the sound of sheer silence.

You may find yourself responding and starting a conversation with God. Focus on the listening rather than the responding. Or you may find your listening sinking into the depths beyond consciousness.

If you become distracted, return to listening to your breathing, and then turn gently to listening again to God . . .

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening. . . .”

Now return gradually to an awareness of your breathing . . .

When you are ready, open your eyes.

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Notes

This is one of a series of meditations responding to *Encountering the Depths* by Mother Mary Clare SLG, one of the books which the Slow Book Group at Exeter Cathedral has been reading. The book is divided into five chapters, for reflection over the five months May, June, July, September and October 2023, with a final session in November considering the whole book. The meditation is a response to Chapter 3 “The Path of Spiritual Progress”, which focuses mainly on the different types of silence and the flow between them.

Clare Bryden

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