

OBSERVING A LEAF

Each of us is used to seeing leaves — on the trees lining many of our streets, on aquatic plants, on our garden plants and houseplants — but we are not necessarily used to taking time to actually *notice* them. Here's an exercise that can help us be more mindful of the amazing diversity of and beauty within God's creation and nurture our sense of wonder!

Choose a leaf from somewhere; it doesn't matter what type of leaf it is or what it looks like (just don't select a poisonous one!). Pretending that you have never seen a leaf before, hold the leaf in your hand and observe it closely — let your attention be absorbed by it. Use your senses to really look at it in detail: notice its physical characteristics (the way it looks), turn it over and around (how it feels) and follow the patterns and form of the leaf. Does the leaf have a distinctive odour? How does it respond to manipulation? Pay attention to the leaf's colours, textures and shapes — just observe the leaf for what it is, without trying to label its attributes as beautiful or ugly, or good or bad, etc.

Try this exercise for as long as you can, perhaps for five minutes. Almost inevitably, your mind will wander as you ponder the leaf. Each time you notice your mind has wandered, simply draw it back to the exercise (be kind and do not judge yourself; wandering minds are common!). Reflect on (and write in your journal about) what you observed and felt about the leaf. You might want to sketch the leaf or trace its outline; you might even place the leaf in your journal.

You could use this practice with houseplants in your home, wildflowers, seed pods, seashells, feathers, rocks and many other natural elements. Food items also can be observed in detail (e.g. raisins, berries, grains). Focusing on the leaf or other item in your hand helps bring your mind to what is right in front of you, and may enable you to perceive it differently, in wonder.

FOR KIDS

1. Make leaf rubbings to wonder at the shapes and patterns

-Put a leaf upside down on the table.

-Place a piece of paper over the leaf.

-While holding the paper and leaf in place, use the side of a dark crayon to rub across the leaf; cover the entire leaf.

Notice anything you hadn't before?

2. How does a leaf breathe? A super easy experiment <https://www.kcedventures.com/blog/how-do-leaves-breathe-a-simple-science-experiment-for-kids>

3. Guess "how many leaves to feed an apple" then google for the answer

Psalm 1:3 That person [whose delight is in the Lord] is like a tree planted by streams of water...whose leaf does not wither.

