

PRACTICE FOR WEEK OF JULY 26

A 'Sounds of Nature' Map

This is a practice that asks us to slow down, to pay deliberate attention to the auditory detail surrounding us, and to 'tune in' to the place where we are. By taking the emphasis off the visual, and using our ears, we notice some of the different details that make each place special. As we keep listening to nature's symphony, we are listening to the voice of God; hearing God's voice requires 'ears to hear' — a listening heart. Nature never stops speaking about its Maker (see Psalm 119:1-4); are we listening to hear what God is declaring to us through his creation?

"Be still and know that I Am God...." Psalm 46:10a

With your journal or another piece of paper in front of you, place your initials at the center of the page to represent yourself. Find a comfortable 'listening place' to pause and sit down¹. Then **close your eyes** and for 3-5 minutes, just listen² to the sounds of nature. Is that a flicker drumming on a tree trunk (or your chimney!)? The wind streaming through the grasses? A squirrel foraging among fallen leaves? Rain falling on dry ground?

Open your eyes and begin to create your sound map. To do so, develop a number of **simple** and quick-to-draw symbols on your page to represent each different sound of nature that you hear³. For example, a musical note or a bird beak could represent a singing bird; one or two wavy lines could indicate a wind gust. Space at the top of your page represents the space in front of you; space at the bottom represents the space behind you; left and right sides are as you would expect.

During the next 5-10 minutes close your eyes to listen for the sounds, opening your eyes only to place the symbols on the map. Your map of nature sounds should show what you heard all around you, in all directions. The symbols should be placed to indicate the direction and distance (near or far) of the sound from where you are seated. There is no right way to draw a sound map, every one is different.

Reflect on this experience in your nature journal. You could consider questions such as: Which sounds were most familiar to you? Did you hear something you had never heard before? Did any sounds surprise you? Were the sounds related or responsive to each other? What sound did you like best (and why)? How do you feel about the sounds you heard? Did this practice help you listen more carefully to God?

Notes:

1. Areas that encompass more than one habitat, such as meadow, stream, and forest, should enable you to hear a variety of natural sounds. However, your own backyard, or a local park will work too.
2. To help you increase your hearing ability, you can make “fox” ears by cupping your hands behind your ears. This hand position creates a greater surface area to capture sounds. You also can cup your hands in front of your ears (palms facing backwards) to hear sounds behind you more easily.
3. Depending where you sit to make your map, you may hear human caused sounds as well as natural ones; you can include these sounds in your map (using different symbols or even words) if you want to.

Variations:

- a) You might like to deliberately include human caused sound as well as nature sounds; do natural and human caused sounds affect you differently? In what ways?
- b) Making a sounds of nature map is an interesting practice to do at night, perhaps when camping, when some organisms become more active. Or, you could do this in different seasons, or in different weather conditions.
- c) You can combine different senses; for instance, you might record the shapes you associate with different sounds. Or, if you could touch the sound, what would it feel like? What texture might it have?
- d) You might want to keep a sound journal, focusing on something in nature that you can hear (wind, water, birds), in different places, at different times and during different seasons.

*Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by
all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2*

Kid's version:

Learn Canada's sparrows' old song and new song at this link:
https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/02/science/sparrow-bird-song.html?emc=confirmation_cnda®i_id=135471839

Bible Verse: Psalm 96: 2&3

song online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5y1SoBt44dg>