



CONNECTING WITH CREATION DEVOTIONALS

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Senses Reflection Hike

Open your session with a body scan prayer. Get into a comfortable position. Close your eyes and take a deep breath in and out three times. Pay attention to your breathing. Move your attention to your face. Is there tension? Are you relaxed? Acknowledge how your body feels moving from your head down to your toes. As you breathe in pray, “God created my body” and as you breathe out, “and my body is good” (repeat this prayer 3 times). Open your eyes and notice your surroundings.

For each section in this devotional, take a few minutes to focus on your surroundings using that sense. Then read the Bible scripture and reflect on how God reveals himself to us through this sense in nature.

1. Sound: What do you hear? What does this reveal about God?

“Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.” Psalm 96:11-12

God loves rhythm and music. Reflect on the sounds of nature and how all creation worships God. How do you worship God?

2. Touch: What does it feel like? What does this reveal about God?

(Challenge: take off your shoes and feel the ground beneath you barefoot or touch a tree, a leaf, a pinecone.)

When Moses encounters the Burning Bush: "God said, "Do not come near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Exodus 3:5

Removing shoes in sacred spaces is common throughout the world and in many religions. This practice grounds us in the moment and connects us physically and spiritually to the place. It shows honor to God. Some people interpret the act of removing shoes as a way to cast aside the concerns and burdens of everyday life and to approach God with a pure and humble heart. If you have removed your shoes, do you feel different?

Adam and Eve were made from soil and, when we die, we return to soil. The soil reminds us of our humanity and mortality and also the cyclical nature of life and death. Reflect on this cycle as you touch the dirt.

3. Sight: What do you see? What does this reveal about God?

Matthew 6:28-31 "And why would you worry about your clothing? Look at all the beautiful flowers of the field. They don't work or toil, and yet not even Solomon in all his splendor was robed in beauty like one of these!"

God makes things colorful and diverse. Everything he creates is beautiful in its own way, including every human body and everything in creation. If we seen beauty as God does, how might the world be different?

4. Scent: What do you smell? What does this reveal about God? (Have you ever been in a cedar forest on a warm summer day? Imagine that smell or find a cedar tree or pine to smell.)

**“Your lips drip nectar, my bride; honey and milk are under your tongue; the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.”
Song of Solomon 4:11 (Also refers to Israel as fragrant like Lebanon in Hosea 14:6)**

In Christian theology, the "bride" in this passage is often interpreted as a symbolic representation of the Church, with Jesus being the bridegroom, reflecting the intimate relationship between Christ and his followers. The distinctive fragrance of Lebanon is often associated with the Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*), which has a unique, creamy woody scent, distinct from other types of cedar, and was used in the construction of the temples in the Bible and in perfume for kings. So we may say that God loves the smell of trees and wants us to smell like trees. Cedar is also a medicinal plant and keeps away pests like moths so it is a symbol of purity and healing. Reflect on the ways of trees and how we can act like trees to be a sweet aroma to God.

5. Taste: (Taste something from nature such as honey or maple syrup) What does it taste like? What other things might we taste from nature? What does this reveal about God?

“He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” Acts 14:17

We would have nothing to eat without God and the plants he created. God created many diverse plants and flavors to give us a full experience of life in abundance. Be sure to thank God and think about where your food comes from every time you eat. Flavors have the power to release oxytocin (a chemical in the brain that helps you feel happy) so eating is not just a survival need but a whole body experience. Additionally, God intended meals and food to be shared in community and conversation connecting us to one another. Food cuisine around the world is an intrinsic part of people's culture because it brings us together. Reflect on the food of your childhood or culture and how it connects you to community.

6. Spirit: God gave us a diverse set of senses to experience the world around us so that we can seek truth in multiple ways. Be prayerful in this space and listen for God's voice to you personally.

On the night of Jesus's arrest, before his crucifixion: "Jesus came with them to a garden called Gethsemane, and told His disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' And he was grieved and prayed in distress about what was to come." Matthew 26:36

Gethsemane was at the base of the Mount of Olives and was the location of the olive press for the grove, where they would be squished under pressure and refined into pure olive oil. Reflect on how God puts us under times of pressure to help us grow stronger in spirit. How can prayer help us get through hard times? How can nature help us?

Consider where would people usually go to pray in that time period? Usually the temple, a house altar, or other altars, so why did Jesus choose to pray in a garden? Jesus knew that we can be close to God when we are in nature. We can pray and connect with God in any space, not just altars and temples, but because nature has a calming effect on the human mind and body, this makes it an especially good place to be reflective and intentional in prayer, to look beyond ourselves and at the broader world around us.

Close your reflection with an intentional time of prayer.