

OUTDOOR PRACTICES

Experience God Everywhere This Summer



Sounds of Nature Map

Do you hear what I hear?

This is a practice that asks us to slow down, to pay attention to the auditory detail surrounding us- 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?

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 listen to the sounds of nature. Is that a flicker drumming on a tree trunk? 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.

Psalm 46:10

Be still and know that I am God

Sounds of Nature

Continued

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?

You could try this at different times of the day or night and see what is different. Try this when you travel or visit family. What is new to you?



God formed the land, the sky, and the seas making the earth a fitting home for the plants, animals and humans he created.

*The world was filled with color, beauty and variety; it provided room for work and play, worship and service, love and laughter.
God rested -- and gave us rest.*

In the beginning everything was very good.

Our World Belongs To God: A Contemporary Testimony