

REST

21-day audio guide –Stress-free – Stroll
in tranquility. Receive relaxation during
stress and tension



By: Mirjam van der Vegt

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A person with short brown hair, seen from behind, wearing a green hooded jacket. They are looking out over a calm body of water, likely a lake or a wide river, with a dense forest of tall green trees in the background. The scene is peaceful and serene.

Introduction

21-day Audio Guide

Rest: A 21-day stroll in tranquility with God

Receive relaxation, remove stress and tension

written by Mirjam van der Vegt in collaboration with Jesus.net

Author and mindfulness trainer Mirjam van der Vegt takes you outdoors. For three weeks, you will learn more about the peace that God wants to give through lessons from both nature and the Bible. You don't have to be a Christian to follow this Audio Guide—it's for everyone. You will learn from Jesus' lessons on tranquility and nature and will delve into habits from various monastic traditions. Together, we will learn what tranquility does to your brain.

Each day's content lasts approximately 12 minutes, and you can listen to this Audio Guide while walking or from the comfort of your chair.

After experiencing her own burnout, Mirjam van der Vegt searched for peace and tranquility. She has written several widely-read books on the topic, including *The Power of Tranquility*. Mirjam is eager to share her discoveries about the quest for tranquility with you.

Introduction



In this 21-day Audio Guide, I venture outdoors in search of tranquility. Will you join me? Away with the stress and noise in your head—can you imagine living free from it? How do we learn to live instead of constantly striving? Walk alongside me with this Audio Guide—literally, if you want to!

First, who am I?

I am seeking a deeply fulfilling life, just like you probably are. In this society full of unrest, difficult choices, and expectations, I long for joy and tranquility. Living instead of striving! I began this quest when I experienced my own burnout and couldn't do anything for a long time. Who would I be if I couldn't do or contribute anything, according to my own feelings?

After my burnout, doctors said I had been living on my reserves for too long and that my body was completely exhausted. They doubted if I would ever be able to write another book. I had to learn to live from a place of tranquility. But how? I went searching.

I learn the most from nature. Trees, in particular, fascinate me endlessly—they teach us a lot about tranquility. That's why I'll be spending a lot of time outdoors for these 21 days. Join me in my Volkswagen van. We'll explore various themes by following a set rhythm with an introduction, a Bible reading, and a walk in nature.

The Audio Guide is divided into these different themes, and we'll spend a few days on each:

1. The foundation of true tranquility

2. Growing powerfully from tranquility

3. God's response to our haste

4. Tranquility and surrender to the seasons

5. Tranquility in your mind

6. No tranquility without justice

7. Working and living from a place of tranquility

Each episode lasts 12 minutes and will include readings, reflection questions, and practices.

What will you receive?

Doctors said I would never write another book and that I had lost my resilience. But in God's tranquility, I became very relaxed. I discovered entirely new aspects of myself and became more than just healthy again—I found deep joy. I never expected that because, during my burnout, I mostly felt depressed. That depression is gone. The journey inward brought me a fantastic adventure. I wish the same for you.

01

So when we desire, we talk to God. God also continually shares his desires with us.



You are Created for Connection

The Foundation of True Tranquility



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Welcome! It's good to have you here! Will you step into my Volkswagen van with me? I often go on adventures with it, and I think it would be great if you joined me. There's an open field nearby where I want to see the sunrise. I hope to journey with you for 21 days around the theme of tranquility, and today, we start with the foundation of tranquility. Walk with me on my quest—you discover more when you use your senses.

Do you recognize that? The restlessness you sometimes feel in your mind? Always feeling like you have to take an extra step to keep life under control? And you're always behind, of course. When do you truly find peace?

The quest for tranquility is one shared by every human throughout the ages. Everyone seeks fulfillment in their own way. I've met with those who have millions in the bank and also with refugees who have nothing—they both seek peace. One wealthy man told me this: "I have millions in the bank, but I didn't know it would yield so little."

The millions didn't provide what he needed. And even though you and I might not have millions, isn't this relatable? That which you have carefully built up yourself cannot truly fill you from within.

"Congratulations," I said to the man with the millions. "

You belong to the needy, just like me. You need someone, and your bank account can't give you that. You must feel like Adam felt when the world lay at his feet in paradise. He was allowed to name everything. But he was missing something. He was missing someone." This sense of lack was before the fall. God gave him the space to first discover himself and his needs—what did he really need?

Once you realize you need something, you often hide it. Or you hide yourself. Just like Adam did. He felt ashamed after things went wrong in paradise, but God called out to him: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9)

I think God calls us in the same way every day. Standing here in the open field, I don't understand why I didn't come out here earlier. When you are vulnerable and emerge, God can meet with you and give you what you need! He calls himself "I AM." When you are there too, an encounter is possible. And in that encounter, that connection, the miracle of life happens! It can be that simple. An encounter brings peace.

You can also meet yourself. Discovering what you need—that's allowed. Many people have learned that focusing on oneself is wrong. That it would be selfish. Was it selfish of Adam to ask for a companion? Rather, it was honest, and that set everything in motion. That's what I find so beautiful—that our desire can open up a new world.



How about you? What do you need right now?
What do you truly long for as we start these 21 days?

We often ask each other, "How are you doing?" In that question is the suggestion that you should always be in motion. If you stand still, things wouldn't be good, but if you're moving along nicely, they would.

I prefer questions like this:
What do you need?

What do you long for?

Write that down in a few sentences, I'll also take a moment to sit down here.

Augustine, an early church father, said this:
"Desire always prays."

So when we desire, we talk to God. God also continually shares his desires with us.

In that dance of desires, that's where the encounter happens! There's tranquility right in the midst of movement.

Encounter and connection with yourself, with each other, with God. And then together, we can experience the gifts he gives us in nature. Tomorrow, we'll unwrap one of those gifts together through a meditation from the Bible. Because God's gifts tell us a lot about him and the tranquility he wants to give us.

See you tomorrow!

02

Think of the fruits that the tree bears, but also consider what they can say and give to you spiritually.



Lectio Divina—You receive Nature to Connect with

The Foundation of True Tranquility



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, let's open the Bible. The form we use comes from the monastic tradition and is called "lectio divina," a divine reading. During a lectio divina, you listen to the text attentively and feel where the words touch your life. In this way, you receive the text as food that nourishes your entire being. You may not understand everything in the text, but that's okay—try to connect where the text resonates with you and contemplate it further. It may be helpful to make notes here.

This first reading comes from the book of Genesis, where God gave the trees as a gift to humanity. A text that you can easily overlook but contains much hidden within it.

Today, we will read the text, and tomorrow, I will discuss it with you during a walk.

Lectio 1—Genesis 1:29 NIV:

"And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.'"

Reflecting on the light

Light a candle and pray: "Let your light be my response and satisfy me."

Reflecting on your own heart

Become aware of your breathing. Honestly tell God how you are feeling.

Reflecting on God's Word

Read and ponder Genesis 1:26–30. What word or passage stands out to you?

Does the text call you to something?

Reflecting and resting in God

Present your thoughts to God. Then, be still in God's presence.

What does He have to say to you?

Shared thoughts

Genesis 1:29—Behold, I have given you... the trees.

The first human being received breath from God—their first gift. But then, another remarkable gift: God gives the human being the plants and the trees. You might easily overlook that phrase, but have you ever truly received that gift, unwrapping it like a present, full of anticipation?

Trees and humans—from this moment, they belong together. Not just a piece of green in your garden, but a source of sustenance. The trees shall be your food. Think of the fruits that the tree bears, but also consider what they can say and give to you spiritually. They carry God's ineffable qualities within them. Look at the trees around you today with a new perspective; they are a timeless gift to you.

Trees not only offer their fruits but also shelter.



Their trunks can serve as a tent pole or pillar,
their branches and leaves offering shelter to the
elements.

Emerging from silence into the world

Extinguish the candle flame. Conclude with your
own prayer or say:

Grant me your eyes

so I may see

bare branches

sunlight dancing on fresh green leaves

bountiful blossoms

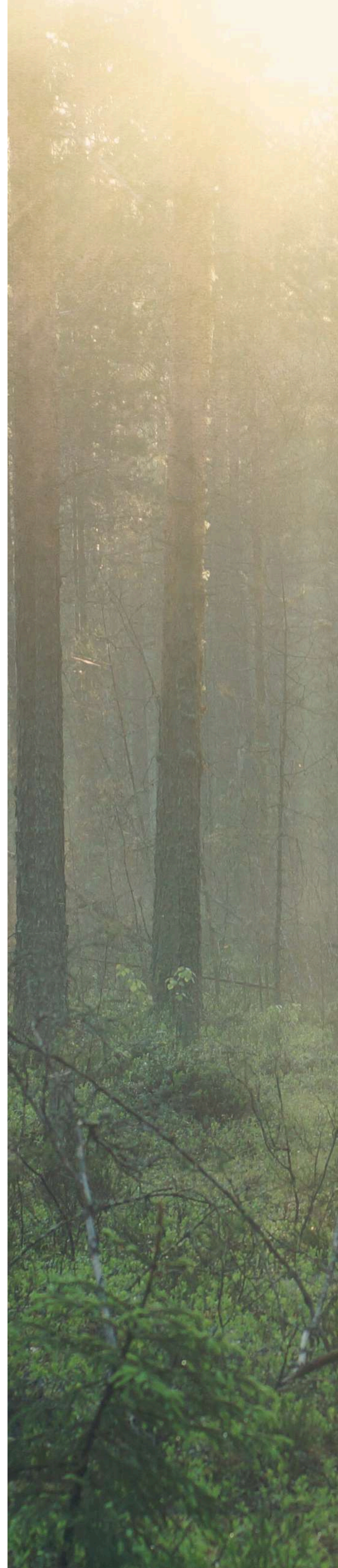
fruits in which You hide:

your love as a gift every day.

[Link to the Audio Guide:
<https://youtu.be/gjh8ZoZRABc>]

03

Do you recognize that? In life, you can be so busy with possessions and what you need. You can spend a considerable amount of time accumulating them, wanting more. How much time am I spending securing my possessions, while I easily forget the gift of nature?



Lessons from trees about the Foundation of Tranquility

The Foundation of True Tranquility



[Listen to the audio!](#)

After yesterday's meditation about the trees, we're heading outside this morning!

I'm not sure what time you're reading or listening to this reflection, but put on your walking shoes and walk with me. Or, if you can't get out today, imagine yourself walking alongside me.

The weather is fantastic, with dense white mist that you know will soon give way to the rising sun, creating a magical scene.

I drive to a relatively new piece of forest. An area with trees, many streams, and open land.

There, I've arrived.

The mist hangs among the pear trees, spreading like a thick, downy blanket over the field. The morning silence is here, and I breathe in and out.

I feel the beauty of the land to my core. It rained last night, so my feet quickly become soaked. Soft dew sits on my face.

I don't know where to look; beauty is everywhere. Spiders have been busy spinning their webs as if this is their regular meeting place. Dew hangs like pearls on the delicate lines.

The light breaks through, creating contrasts, depths, and colors.

The air carries the scent of the morning, where

everything is still waking up.

The first birds are already awake. A robin hops in front of me.

Today, I need to have some complicated conversations, so I'll start here.

I walk with God through the garden.

Trees are snugly nestled together, others standing solitary in a spot—there is room for everyone. In the forest, there is no right or wrong. Creation is open to the good and the bad.

I reflect on yesterday's lectio divina, where God gave trees as a gift to humanity. God created the earth for humans. Humans were mandated to cultivate the earth. Everything standing and living here is a gift from God to us.

Do you recognize that? In life, you can be so busy with possessions and what you need. You can spend a considerable amount of time accumulating them, wanting more. How much time am I spending securing my possessions, while I easily forget the gift of nature?

Many people long for a message of hope from heaven, for some kind of sixth sense coming to life.

But often, you forget about the other five senses you have!



Did you know that by using your senses, you can better discern and connect?

A remarkable example of how trees communicate with their senses is this: trees talk to each other through the scents they emit. In the jungle, if an elephant eats the leaves of a tree, the tree emits warning signals through scents into the air. The other trees “smell” that and ensure their own leaves become poisonous so the elephant passes their door!

Trees communicate not only above ground by their scents but also underground. Through countless networks of fungal threads, they are interconnected and make agreements with each other, such as when to drop their fruits.

What strikes me as I walk through the forest here is the interconnectedness of nature. Everything is connected to everything else. When I walk here, I feel invigorated, and when I use all my senses, I feel healthier. That's not just a thought; it's actually proven. People who live surrounded by greenery are happier and healthier. Stress hormones in the brain decrease, and happiness hormones increase. The brain recharges.

Some countries have experimented with large healing gardens near hospitals. Some evidence suggests that cancer patients who are guided through the garden have better overall well-being and may recover faster! Trees emit pinene, a chemical that protects the trees from the sun, but which also triggers a chemical reaction in our bodies, lowering the level of the stress hormone

cortisol; this may also enhance the activities of cancer-killing cells.

When God gives humanity a gift, he has thought about it! He gives us gifts that are good for us!

Don't neglect your senses, because they bring you life and help you learn to discern and connect!

connect!

Try the following exercises:

1. Touch something in nature. Feel the earth—you are part of it and meant to cultivate it! There are over 600 million sensory cells in our skin. They're not there for no reason. They are directly connected to our brain and teach us to become wise.

2. Listen. Pay attention and listen to the rustling leaves outdoors or the whispering of the wind.

3. Smell the trees. Trees smell so fresh and beautiful, and they also emit many beneficial fragrances.

4. Look at some greenery. Search for trees, plants, or grass. Our brains love green.

5. Taste the harvest of the land. Enjoy some fruits and vegetables harvested from the earth.

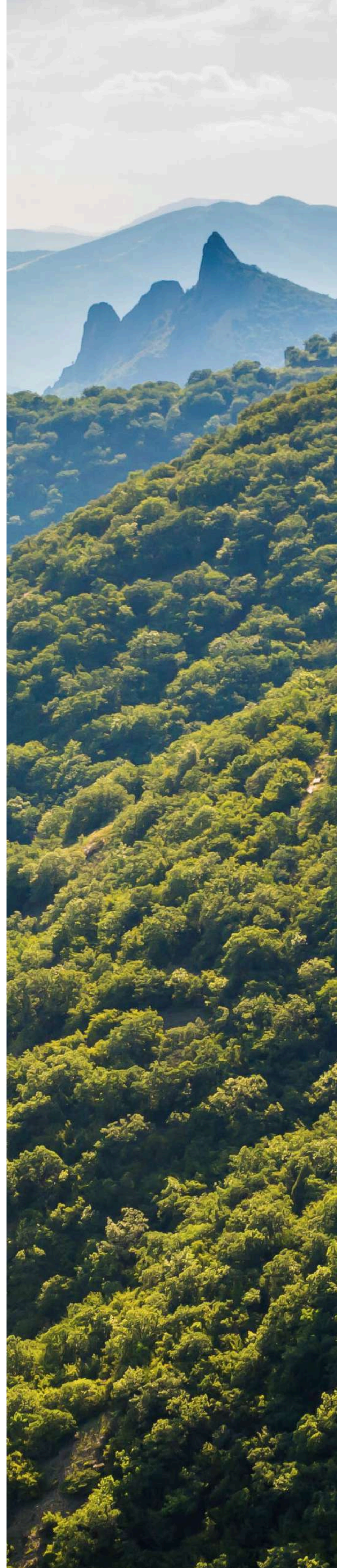
Experience the connection.

Breathe in and out.

You'll notice that there's naturally less noise in your head.

04

Jesus did something many of us find challenging—he dared to take breaks, even during the storm.



The Growth Lessons from Trees

Growing powerfully from tranquility



[Listen to the audio!](#)

It's great to have you back! Welcome to the second theme of these 21 days: growing powerfully from tranquility.

Today, I'm parked with my Volkswagen van in a beautiful spot right in the middle of the forest. I step outside to see how the sun shines through the treetops onto the soft moss. It's completely quiet here. I have my Bible lying next to me and am, once again, impressed by Jesus' lessons of tranquility.

Jesus had an incredibly busy life—the expectations surrounding him were towering, and he faced many challenges. Yet, he managed to maintain tranquility.

Today, with my feet on the soft moss, I flip through the Bible, searching for Jesus' secrets. There are many!

1. Be unreachable sometimes to be available.

Jesus did something many of us find challenging—he dared to take breaks, even during the storm! He took a nap right in the middle of the lake (see Matthew 8:23–27); apparently, he needed it and listened to that need.

Often, in the morning, Jesus would rise early to connect with his father, as seen, for example, in Mark 1. He sought a solitary place early in the morning to pray. He invites his disciples to do the same. "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest," he encourages them

(Mark 6:31 NIV). They accepted the invitation and sailed by boat to a remote place to be alone (see verse 32).

Jesus sets the example: sometimes being unreachable helps you to then be available for the right things. *When are you unreachable? When do you experience solitude and quiet?*

2. Choose good habits that give you perspective.

Jesus had several important habits, and one of them was that he habitually went to the Mount of Olives to pray (see Luke 22:39).

When he had to make an important decision, he often took some time away or went up the mountain to reflect. He made sure he regained a fresh perspective first.

Where do you find new perspectives?

3. Don't opt for the quick fix but focus on the big picture.

Jesus dared to leave things "unfinished." He wasn't a people pleaser but was focused on his purpose. Everyone wanted to be healed by him, but he didn't heal everyone. He left the sick behind and went on to the next village to fulfil his mission on earth. It takes courage to say "no" to some things in order to say "yes" to others, but it also brings peace. Following God's plan instead of trying to please everyone.

Where are you pleasing people when you could



be pursuing your big picture?

4. Don't focus on what you lack, but trust God.

Do you remember the boy with the five loaves and two fish? (See John 6:8–11). Jesus performs a miracle with them because He looks at what's available, not what's lacking. That brings tranquility—because there's always a way forward. Even if it's small, in Jesus' eyes, it becomes significant.

What do you have to offer Jesus today, even if it's little?

What resonates with you the most, and how could you apply it today?

As you think about that, I'm going for a nap in the midst of the storm.

That moss over there looks very soft... I'm heading off the radar for a moment!

05

When you stand by God's stream or are transplanted there, your leaves will not wither, even in a dry season. You bear fruit in due time.



Lectio Divina—Growing from Tranquility

Growing powerfully from tranquility



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, once again, is a reading from the Bible, a lectio divina. Listen to the text attentively and feel where the words touch your life. In this way, you receive the text as spiritual food. Try to connect with where the text resonates with you and contemplate it further. It can be helpful to make notes.

Today's reading is about Psalm 1, where humans are compared to trees. God plants the righteous person for growth and flourishing. Today, we'll read the text, and tomorrow, I'll discuss it with you during a walk.

Lectio 2—Psalm 1:3 NIV

"That person [the righteous] is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers."

Pause in the Light

Light a candle and pray: "Plant me in your light."
Pause in Your Heart

Become aware of your breathing. Honestly tell God how you're feeling.

Pause in God's Word

Read and ponder Psalm 1. Which word or part stands out to you?
Does the text evoke something within you?

Pause and Rest in God

Present your thoughts to God. Then, be still in God's presence.

What does He have to say to you?

Shared Thoughts

Psalm 1:3—*He shall be like a tree planted by streams of water.*

This passage talks about a tree planted by water streams. In Hebrew, it says "transplanted." In the Middle East, there are dry seasons, and the vine dresser may plant a tree that requires a lot of water by a stream.

In Jeremiah 2:13, God Himself is compared to the fountain of living water. When you stand by God's stream or are transplanted there, your leaves will not wither, even in a dry season. You bear fruit in due time. Note: it doesn't say that you will bear fruit in *all* seasons. Like a tree, there's always a season when it's in leaf—a period of foliage. A tree planted by God's stream will bloom anew each time. It's a beautiful promise that invites you to draw from it. In this Psalm, focus not on the fruit but on the joy you find in God—from there, it will flow.

Where is joy flowing for you?

What do you need to experience joy in God?

From Silence into the World



Extinguish the candle flame. Conclude with your own prayer or pray:

Plant me, Lord,
by streams of water

teach me to seek joy
deepen my roots

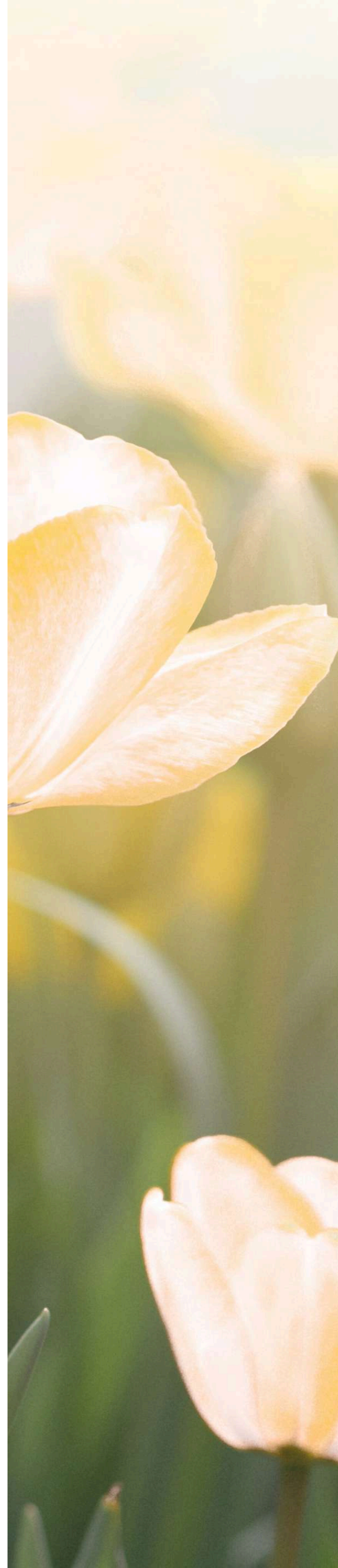
and protect me.

<https://youtu.be/l6KaYhK5Ux8>

06

Who are you connected to?
How can you exchange
something with each other, just
like the trees do?

What do you need to prune
above ground so you can
mature?



How do we come to life, and what can we learn from nature?

Growing powerfully from tranquility



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Will you join me in the forest again today? Keep in mind yesterday's Bible passage, where humans are compared to trees. Today, the trees are going to tell us something...

I've parked my VW bus next to a few fallen trees. I often come here, and the walking route passes by the most magnificent tree trunks, thick and thin alike.

On this walk, the trees remind me of a few important lessons:

1. Outward appearance is deceptive

People often think that thick trees are the oldest or grow the most, but their size can be deceptive. Thin trees can be much older than thick ones. This is because the thickness of a tree depends on light, and there are both shade and light trees. Light trees usually shoot straight up and, because they catch a lot of light, they also grow wider faster. Shade trees can thrive in the shadow of other trees. They receive less light and therefore grow less thick, but it doesn't necessarily mean they're younger!

2. Trees always grow

Trees always grow! One year, the growth ring may be a little thicker than the next, depending on the light, but it always grows. If you've lived in the dark one year, the growth ring may be a bit thinner, but you still grew.

3. Life comes from within

Trees come to life through their underground root network. Their roots often connect with fungi and other trees, facilitating a lively exchange underground. They make agreements with their roots and ask each other for help when they're lacking something. They also protect the weak specimens. If a tree is the "mother" of several saplings around it, it protects them first.

A forest is like a family. As I walk through the forest like this, I thank God that I can be part of this big family, even if only for a while.

We live in a time when we are mainly focused on above-ground growth. If the picture looks good from the outside, you'll develop well, right? From the trees, you can learn that most of the work takes place underground! What we have to do above ground is mainly pruning and seeing what comes up. If a tree is in a sparse area with few roots to connect to, it will die sooner.

One of the most beautiful stories about growing from tranquility is that of the Australian forest maker Tony Rinaudo. In 2018, he won a Right Livelihood Award, the alternative Nobel Prize, for his work in Niger. He developed a simple method to grow millions of trees in desert-like areas without planting a single one—a method that emerged after a long series of failures. Tony, an



agriculturalist and missionary, left for Africa in 1980 with his family. His desire was to combat ongoing desertification. He did what seemed most logical to him: planting trees. Soon, he discovered that it was pointless. In the heat-stricken area, the seedlings didn't survive. No matter what he tried, everything failed. After years of failure, he felt quite depressed.

One day, he drove through the desert—the barren land seemed to be mocking him. He got out of his car to check his tire pressure and cried out to God in desperation. Suddenly, his eye was caught by a small, insignificant bush. It was a weed that farmers always removed from their land before cultivation. Tony walked over to the bush and examined it more closely. Due to his experience with trees, he suddenly saw that it wasn't a weed at all but a very small tree! If this mini-tree could grow here, there must be an underground network of fungal threads in the soil; otherwise, it could never survive.

The solution he had desperately sought all this time was literally under his feet. From that moment on, he stopped planting seedlings and instead persuaded farmers to leave the “weeds” on their land and prune them so they could grow into trees. At first, they laughed at him, but slowly but surely, the trees and his ideas gained ground. After 20 years, 200 million trees had been added without planting a single one. There are official satellite images showing the land before and after—a world of difference!

Don't give up, these trees seem to say. Believe in

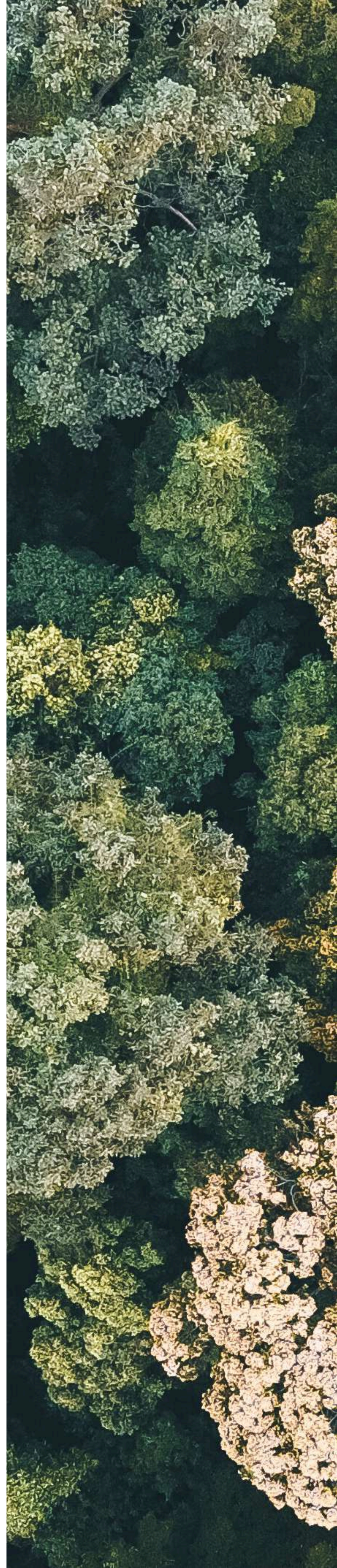
the underground root network—we come to life through connection with others. When we value rich soil, we can grow calmly without needing too much.

Who are you connected to? How can you exchange something with each other, just like the trees do?

What do you need to prune above ground so you can mature?

07

God's response to our hurry is encounter, celebration, and connection with each other.



God's Slow Peace

God's response to our hurry



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Welcome back. Thank you for traveling with me again. The time you dedicate to this is special. Together, we're seeking God's slow peace as an answer to our hurry. Everything around us is getting faster and faster. For true sustainable growth and maturity, time is needed. But, often, it seems like there's no time because we want to see the results—now!

Do you recognize that feeling? What would you have liked to have finished yesterday instead of today?

We're in a hurry, and ideally, there should be a bit of quick tranquility to counter that. So, moments of rest are often used to sustain our current lives. And that life has to be faster, more efficient, sustainable... before you know it, you're chasing after these terms. But efficiency is sometimes the enemy of making choices. Because if something can be done faster, you can do more of it. You run faster and never come to a standstill.

We're not on this journey for nothing for these 21 days. We have the bus because we wanted to slow down in our lives. And it is certainly slowing—the bus often has something wrong with it. It doesn't go as fast as a car, and you have to carefully pack it every time you go out. The bus teaches me to be meticulous and slows me down.

On a day when I go out with the bus, I usually accomplish less, simply because it takes time to find a nice spot to take a walk in nature. My priorities shift when I'm moving with this mode of

transportation. By the way, you don't necessarily need a bus for that—you can also decide to walk more and, therefore, build in some time to slow down. For example, if you want to walk 5 km per day, you'll have to organize your schedule differently.

When I read about silence in the Bible, I was greatly surprised by God's lessons of peace found in the Old Testament. Let me share a few.

In Genesis 2, we read about the first day between God and humans—a special day. God created humans and desires for humans to cultivate the earth. There's plenty of work to do because not a single shrub had yet appeared on the earth, as humans had not done anything yet. “Get to work,” you might think. But that's not how it goes. **The first day between God and humans is a long, lazy day—a day of rest. God wants to be with His creatures. Being—that's the basis. Silence is a starting point, not a conclusion.**

What do you want to start? How can you add peace to this beginning?

In addition to the day of rest, God gives His people a few brilliant instructions to stay at the core of life. One of the most important ones is the many feasts He wants to celebrate with His people (see Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy for accounts of the various feasts the Israelites celebrated). Celebrating is a form of resting. Usually, we achieve a result and immediately move on to the next one. There isn't much time

who wants to meet us time and time again.



for celebration. But God wants to celebrate life with us. Again, it's not about the result but about being together and creating from there instead of performing.

What do you have to celebrate today? Take the time to celebrate it extensively this week.

I'm now parked next to a field edge of a farmer who keeps the edges of his field clear and plants them with flowers. Every year, everyone is allowed to come here and pick flowers. This has a lot to do with another important slowdown moment from God.

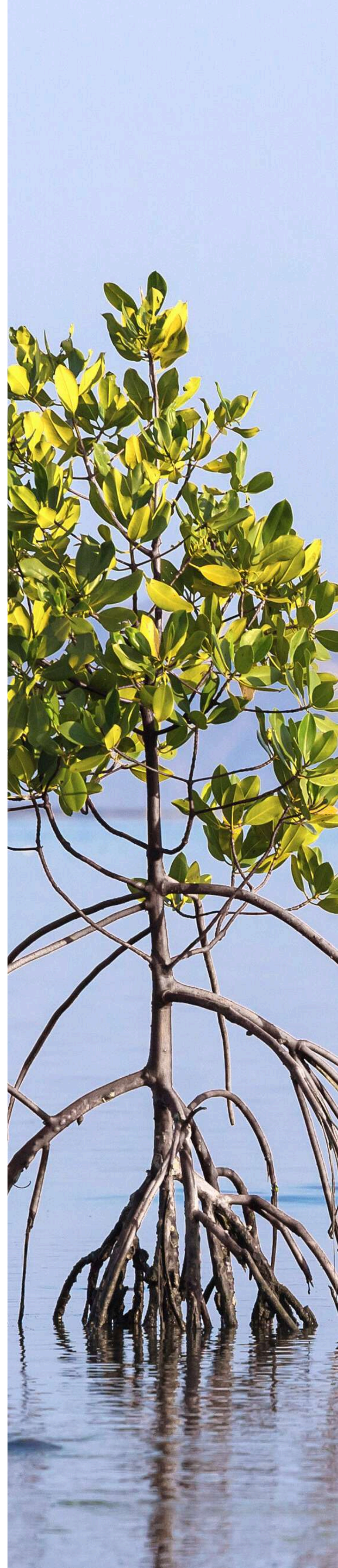
In addition to weekly and monthly rest and feast moments, God asks the Israelites to keep the edges of their fields clear for the poor and the stranger (see Leviticus 23:22). This special rule has far-reaching consequences because on the edge of the field, the rich Boaz meets the refugees Ruth and they fall in love (see Ruth 2). Jesus's family tree begins here—Jesus was born from the edge of the field! It teaches me something important: Do I plan my life to the brim, or do I still have room for the poor and the stranger? It could very well be that real life comes from there, instead of always rushing through.

Assignment: Take two time slots per week for unexpected matters and encounters.

God's response to our hurry is encounter, celebration, and connection with each other. Tomorrow, you'll discover more about the God

08

Where have you met God?
How can you commemorate it?
Perhaps by planting a tree.



Lectio Divina: God Meets People Under the Trees

God's response to our hurry



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, once again, we delve into a reading from the Bible. Listen to the text attentively and feel where the words touch your life. In this way, you receive the text as spiritual nourishment. Try to connect with the parts of the text that resonate with you and reflect on them. It can be helpful to make notes.

Today's reading is about the oak of Moreh. Under this oak, God meets humanity and makes promises to them. Take a moment to pause and receive what God has in store for you. An encounter with Him is always surprising. Today, we read the text, and tomorrow, we'll discuss it further during a walk.

Lectio 3—Genesis 12:6–8

"Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time, the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him."

Pausing in the light

Light a candle and pray: "Those who seek You, seek the light."

Pausing in your own heart

Become aware of your breathing. Honestly tell God how you're feeling.

Pausing in God's Word

Read and contemplate Genesis 12:4–8. Which word or passage stands out to you? Does the text prompt you to do something?

Pausing and resting in God

Present your thoughts to God. Then, be silent in His presence. What does He have to say to you?

Shared thoughts

Genesis 12:6 "...came to the great tree of Moreh at Shechem ... The Lord appeared to Abram."

You encounter this oak at Moreh three times in the Bible. Moreh means "teacher" or "instructor." In some translations, this oak is called a terebinth—a low, knotty tree with branches and twigs that provide a lot of shade. It is an evergreen tree with a strong trunk that can become very old. The fruits of the terebinth are a type of nuts that produce oil. This is the place where God reveals Himself to humanity.

At this holy place of the Lord (see Joshua 24:26), God makes a promise that he will give in abundance, showing Abram the land he has set out for him. Abram lived in a time of polytheism, but after this encounter with God, he built an altar for the God who appeared to him at the oak, and he called upon His name there. God frequently appears by trees, as you will discover in the coming weeks. They seem to be silent witnesses to the love between God and humanity.

Where have you met God?



How can you commemorate it? Perhaps by planting a tree.

Emerging from the silence into the world

Extinguish the candle flame. Conclude with your own prayer or pray with a poem by Willem de Merode:

"We must become like the trees

that root deeply in the deep ground.

Then a murmur will flow through us

and all the leaves will become mouths."

[Link to the song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgM5n7i7bTw>]

09

For those who look closely,
there is new life. But only if you
look, right?"



The Art of Waiting

God's Response to our Hurry



[Listen to the audio!](#)

It's good to have you here again. Today, we're walking in a special place in the heart of the country. In 2021, the town of Leersum experienced a remarkable natural phenomenon. In just two minutes, a gust of wind hit the village and its surrounding forest, completely transforming the landscape. A large part of the forest was destroyed, permanently altering the view for many people.

"You think the appearance of a village is determined by its houses," a man told me last week in the forest, "but that's not true. A village owes its appearance to the trees, and that appearance was permanently changed." And so I spoke to more eyewitnesses, but more on that later. Why am I taking you to this place?

God's slow peace, which we've been discussing these days, may sound beautiful, but this slow peace is often painful. Why does it take so long for us to experience peace? Can't it happen a bit faster? Why does God sometimes keep us waiting? In yesterday's Bible passage, God makes great promises to Abram under the tree of Moreh. As you continue to follow Abram's life, you'll see that these promises didn't just materialize afterward. Abram experiences a turbulent life in which he must learn to wait. What if God makes beautiful promises now, but they're not visible yet? What if there's chaos in your life? Where is peace then?

I hope to find that answer here in Leersum. You can simply walk here along the "war zone," as

Leersum was called after the great windstorm. Fallen trees were removed for days. It's awe-inspiring. How can I describe it? Fallen wood everywhere. Irregular shapes. Giant roots stick out of the ground. A valley of dry bones, that's what it feels like to walk here. It feels like mourning. Impressive. Everywhere, dead kindling is piled up. This place is moving. I think of people who have been affected by terrible events, by illness, by war, or by divorce. Perhaps you immediately think of an event in your own life. That's how life feels then—chaotic.

(music)

It's a miracle that no one lost their lives here. I just spoke to an elderly lady with a dog. She told me that on that Friday afternoon in June, she had checked the forecast. She went out with her dog, as nothing indicated that it would rain. She was just on her way back home and was leashing her dog when it started.

Everything turned white as hailstones raced by at 100 km per hour. She hurried to the nearest tree and sat underneath it. In hindsight, it was not very clever, of course, but how was she to know? Fortunately, this tree remained standing and protected her while she saw everything around her fall. Within two minutes, it was over. In the dead silence that followed, she called her husband. He opened the front door and saw fallen trees. It took him a while to find his wife.

Seven thousand trees fell, and sixteen hectares of



forest disappeared. Not only did the forest disappear, but so did people's views. A woman who had lost her husband shortly before also lost the comforting sight of the forest edge. She felt completely displaced. Chaos. That's what it is sometimes.

And then? Forest ranger Maarten Den Hartigh talks about the approach in this nature reserve. Here, they employ the tactic of waiting. They don't do much and let the chaos exist. From this, a primeval forest is now emerging, without human intervention. What was once a forest full of pines now has the chance to grow into something new. Everywhere, there are flowers, mushrooms, and young new vegetation.

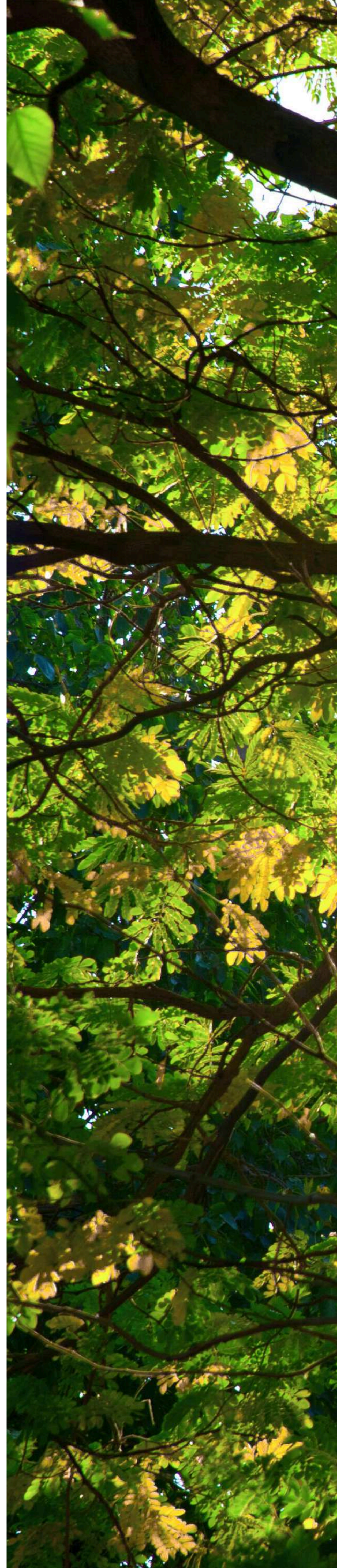
The chaos lies open and exposed in the light. "We see it emerging every day," the woman with the dog just told me. "For those who look closely, there is new life. But only if you look, right?" I walk along the remnants of mighty forest giants. For those who look closely, there is new life.

With every step on the path full of broken branches, I hear these words resonate. For those who look closely... That requires being close to the chaos. Being there, looking closely. Exactly what they're doing here in Leersum. *Being there*. Could the miracle of peace be hidden there?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIWgloq48AM>

10

Hold nothing back and don't compare yourself to others. Flowers don't compare themselves to each other—they simply bloom in their own beauty. Summer asks: How are you blooming?



Each Season Invites You

Rest and Surrender to the Seasons



[Listen to the audio!](#)

It's mid-autumn. Leaves are scattered everywhere, inviting me to let go of things this season as well. I don't know about you, but I always end up filling my schedule more than is practical. And occasionally, I need to prune and let go—the leaves tell me this.

Each season has its own invitation. **Late summer and autumn invite us to harvest and let go of what we've carefully nurtured.** The leaves lying on the ground are also a form of harvest. They are the last gifts the tree gives to the earth, full of nutrients.

I once spoke to a forest ranger who gets angry every season at the fact that we humans dismiss these gifts of the leaves as rubbish that needs to be cleared away as quickly as possible. Leaves fall on concrete streets and concrete backyards. If we don't spread those leaves in the garden, it's as if we're not accepting these gifts. Heaven gives, but who receives? We no longer even realize that nature wants to give us something. Autumn asks you: What richness do you have to let go of?

Then comes winter. Many plants, trees, and shrubs have let go of everything. In trees, the sap flows come to a complete halt, and other crops go underground. It's time to wait quietly. The trees become visible down to their core. Their silhouettes stand out against the sky—in all their nakedness, they are often beautiful. **Winter invites you to return to your essence.** Who are you when you possess nothing or can't produce

anything? Winter asks you: Who are you in the silence of waiting? It's an invitation to be human without adornment.

A human without adornment... just like with the trees, at some point, it starts bubbling again. **Spring begins with the desire to reach out again.** The sap starts flowing again in many shrubs and trees, and that which has been waiting underground peaks above ground. Spring invites you to desire and reach out for challenges. Some people suppress spring in themselves. "Look how cold I was in the winter," you say to yourself. "You never want to be that cold again, so stop longing." But how unfortunate is that because you're denying yourself a chance for renewal. You're not the same as you were a year ago; you're always growing. Spring asks you: What do you need to renew? Now is the time.

In summer, growth continues. Not only upward growth (as in spring) but also growth in detail. Flowers and creatures facilitate pollination—it's a time when everything connects. A time that invites you to connect and love. Step outside with your beauty and give your best. Hold nothing back and don't compare yourself to others. Flowers don't compare themselves to each other—they simply bloom in their own beauty. *Summer asks: How are you blooming?*

The questions posed by each season help you find peace. When you discover that there's always new blossoming possible, you don't need to cling desperately to the old. Sometimes, the



seasons in your own life don't synchronize with the seasons of creation. I know this well. Once, I “camped out” in a long winter season. When the meteorological summer came, I was almost angry at her—I wanted to stay in the dark and cold. And yet, I sat under the flowering magnolia, and she gave me hope. Because she told me that a blooming season would come back into my life eventually.

What season of your life are you in? What do you need in this season?

Tomorrow, another reading from the Bible. We are visiting Job, who lost everything and was clearly in the winter of life! What can we learn here? See you tomorrow!

11

When a person dies, can they live again? Take solace in the hope of the trees. For in connection with God, you will be like a tree planted by living water.



Lectio Divina on Job

Rest and Surrender to the Seasons



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, we return to a reading from the Bible. Listen to the text attentively and feel where the words intersect with your life. In this way, you receive the text as spiritual nourishment. Try to connect with where the text resonates with you and reflect further on it. It can be helpful to make notes here.

Today's reading is about the life of Job. Job experiences great abundance but also a deep lack. After everything is taken from him, he is deeply despairing. He sees himself as worth less than a tree. His will to live comes to a halt. Listen to his cry of despair in Job 14:7–10. Today, we read the text, and tomorrow we will discuss it further.

Lectio 4—Job 14:7–10 NIV

“At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant. But a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more.”

Reflecting on the Light

Light a candle and pray: “Shed your light upon my questions so that I may carry life with lightness.”

Reflecting on Your Own Heart

Become aware of your breath. Honestly tell God

how you are feeling.

Reflecting on God's Word

Read and contemplate Job 14:7–10. What word or passage stands out to you? Does the text call you to something?

Reflecting and Resting in God

Present your thoughts to God. Then, be still in His presence. What does He have to say to you?

Shared Thoughts

Job 14:7—At least there is hope for a tree. Job feels hopeless, which is understandable given all that has happened to him. Job lost his family, his livelihood, and his health (see Job 1–2). This significant, blameless man is felled like a mighty forest giant, losing everything he held dear. But, says Job, at least there is still hope for the trees. They sprout again when they smell water. They form new twigs, though no one would have thought it possible. In Job 19:10 (ESV), Job says, “...my hope has he pulled up like a tree.”

Job places his cry of despair in God's hands. And when you know God, you know what He can do with cries of despair—He turns everything around. This cry of despair becomes a sort of prophecy because, at the end of his life, Job comes more fully alive than ever in a miraculous way. But Job doesn't know that yet. Right now, he is screaming to the heavens, holding nothing back from God.



Everything belongs to God—so give Him your despair too.

When a person dies, can they live again? Take solace in the hope of the trees. For in connection with God, you will be like a tree planted by living water.

Returning to the World from Silence

Extinguish the candle flame. Conclude with your own prayer or say:

All belongs to You.

I am restless about...

All belongs to You.

I am afraid of...

All belongs to You.

I feel powerless about...

All belongs to You.

My restlessness, my fears, my powerlessness, my despair.

I place it under Your mighty blessing.

<https://youtu.be/yIKS237Lf60>

12

When you stop fighting your grief, peace emerges. And from that peace, something new can also blossom.



Space for Grief

Rest and Surrender to the Seasons



[Listen to the audio!](#)

"At least there is hope for a tree," Job spoke in yesterday's Bible passage (Job 14:7 NIV).

Today, I sit on the outskirts of Otterlo, near the Kröller Müller Museum. I often come to this place because it is quiet, and they have beautiful fallen trees scattered throughout the landscape. Trees in decay, trees in mourning. They draw me in. Did you know that 40% of forest life depends on dead wood. Branch litter is good for a forest, but we prefer to tidy up that branch litter as quickly as possible. But why?

We are willing to surrender to the beautiful aspects of life, but surrendering to sadness and grief is often met with resistance. Feeling good can last indefinitely, but feeling rotten must be over as quickly as possible.

And then we find ourselves in a struggle. A struggle with ourselves, a struggle with our surroundings.

But look—over there lies a beautiful specimen.

Unashamedly, this fallen tree takes its place on the ground. How often do we conceal our own discomfort? A tree does not do that. It simply lies on the ground and takes up even more space than before. It takes its time to decay. Feel the wood. It is soft and vulnerable, enabling small life forms to feed on it. This tree says, "Once I was mighty and strong, but not anymore. I am vulnerable, yet I still participate. I am part of this landscape, and I am not ashamed of it."

A little further on stands a battered specimen at a crossroads. Being visibly uncomfortable and still participating. Even more, it's adding to life in your own way.

I find nature enormously comforting. There is much illness in our family. My brother-in-law has acquired a brain injury after a brain tumor and multiple surgeries and can no longer live at home. He has become a battered tree. My mother-in-law is mentally ill. My father-in-law was killed by a drug dealer. These situations have brought and continue to bring me into grief that I can no longer suppress. In a period when my own husband also became ill, I knew I could no longer hide from these feelings.

I started to explore grief more. What is it, really? Why would I hide it at all? If joyful feelings can be a driving force in my life, why can't feelings of sadness be?

Grieving is an act of love.

You surrender to what you loved—you have lost it and remember it, giving it a new place in your life. Sometimes, you have to do that over and over again, a kind of "living grief." In the case of my brother-in-law, we keep losing something, which we have to find a place for again. When you give something a place, like this tree lying here, there is also room for something new. New small life arises precisely in the valley, on that dead decaying wood. Why would I walk past that? When you stop fighting your grief, peace



light on your path.

emerges. And from that peace, something new can also blossom.

Everyone has their own way of grieving. And look around for that too—one leaf falls from the tree while the other remains hanging and slowly decays until only the veins are visible. Are we allowed to grieve differently? Do we allow ourselves and each other space for that?

"You can also linger in your grief," someone might say. Personally, I don't believe in that. Grief is grief. Do you say to a tree that is decaying that it remains hanging in its decay? Grief sometimes simply makes you a different person. But a different person is not necessarily a less valuable person. There are two sides to grief: loss-oriented grief and restoration-oriented grief.

What can happen when you grieve is that you think there is no life left. But that's not true. Look around you in nature, at the seasons. If you think you'll never emerge from grief again, learn to look again at the creation around you. And just lie down in the light. Give yourself lots of light and encouragement.

Maybe grieving is actually surrendering to love.

Decaying and then rising again as a different person.

Jesus showed us this. He died on a cross and rose from the dead.

He went through that journey into the depths with you, and he is visible in every glimmer of

13

Judge the day by what you sow
rather than what you harvest,
and your life will take a
different turn.



How Does Peace of Mind Work?

Peace of mind



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Great to have you back!

Do you know that feeling? Constant noise and unrest in your mind. You want things to make sense in your head, you want control. But it never seems to work. So you start to work, to grind, to worry. Did you know that 90% of humanity does that? Thinking, overthinking, and thinking again.

For the next three days, we're going out to the fields. Because I've discovered that there are many lessons to be found in the fields for that grinding mind.

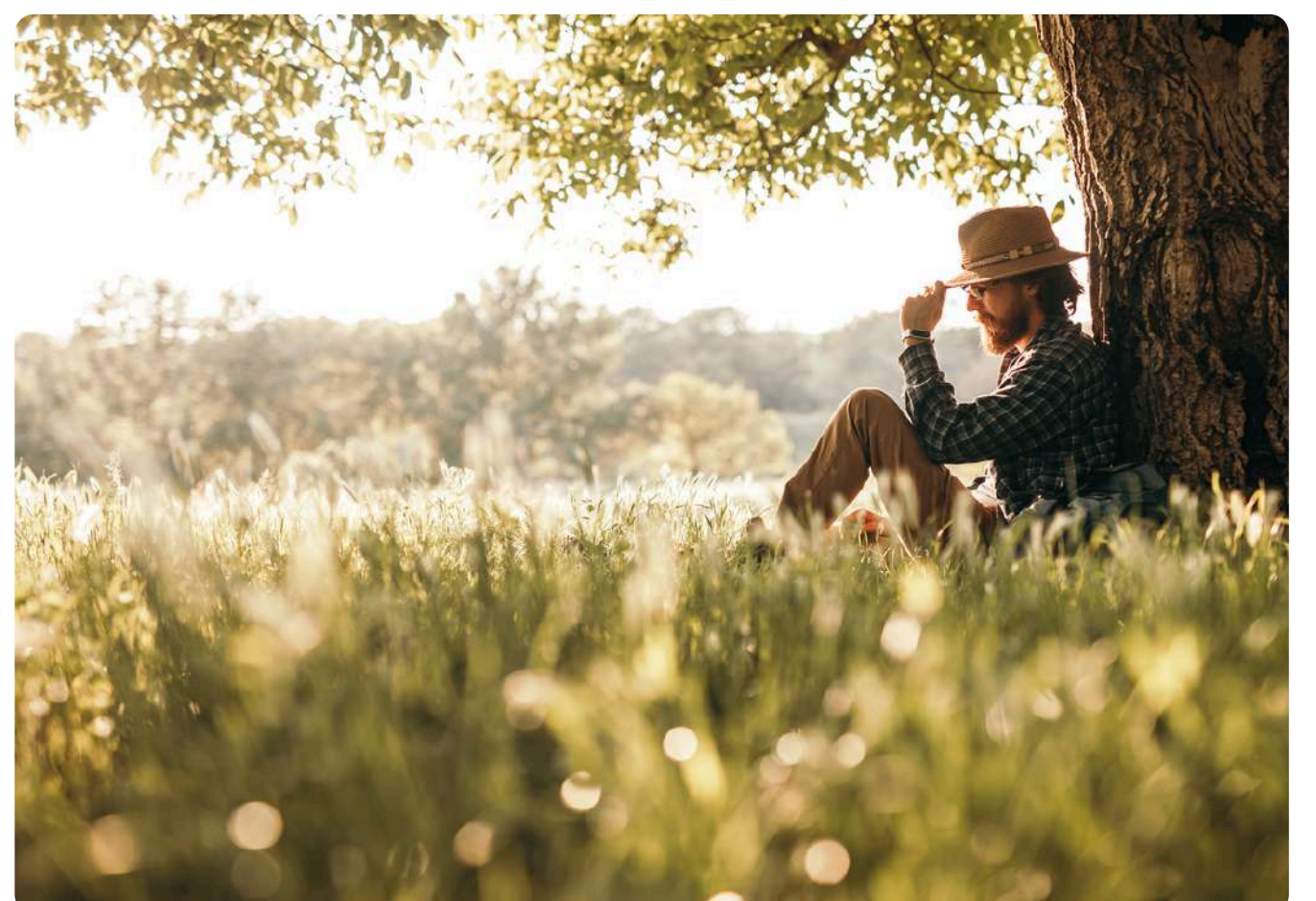
As the Bible says in James 5:7 (NIV), *“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains.”* I read that Bible verse with my daughter, and she said, “So you can actually rest in your expectation that things will turn out well, just like a farmer does.”

The farmer doesn't sit on his land every day. You don't make rice grow faster by pulling on it. Sowing and then calmly learning to expect—that's the order. When you learn to deal with this in a good way, you will find peace. A nun in Tilburg told me her life motto: “Judge the day by what you sow rather than what you harvest, and your life will take a different turn.” She was regularly sent out for short periods and never saw the result of her work, so she focused on what she could sow each day instead.

As a human being, you are invited to sow with a free hand. We don't have to sow what we don't have, says the Bible, but dare to let go of what you have received, and God will give you a rich harvest, so he promises (see 2 Corinthians 9:6).

The Bible also tells us to pay attention to what you sow—because if you sow wind, you will reap a storm. And, to pay attention to where you sow—carefully choose the ground in which your seeds can flourish (see Galatians 6:7–10).

We live in a society that mainly has a harvest mentality, focused on above-ground growth and always looking for more. Harvesting is a wonderful thing, but when you forget the sowing mentality, you ultimately deplete the land. With a sowing mentality, you focus on taking good care of your resources and your land. You sow and take care of the land, and you celebrate grateful harvest festivals. Wonder is an important byproduct of a sowing mentality. When you have lost wonder and only produce like an efficient



robot, you know that you have lost something somewhere.

Sowing Mentality	Harvest Mentality
Focused on deep internal germination.	Focused on above-ground bloom.
Take good care of your resources and seeds, but you can also sow too much or too little.	Sometimes deplete your resources for growth and bloom.
Focused on nourishment, light, air, and rooting.	Focused on what you may sow, on what you already have.
Tastes the ground for sustainable growth.	Counts the harvest of the day.
Can marvel at the harvest, celebrates grateful harvest festivals.	Already expected the harvest, is already thinking about the next harvest.
Takes care of the land in which sowing is done.	Is focused on what the land has to offer him.

What have you been able to sow last week?
Name the very small things.

When was the last time you were amazed?

In a dream, I walked into a store. Behind the counter stood an angel.

"What do you sell here?" I asked.

"Anything you want," said the angel.

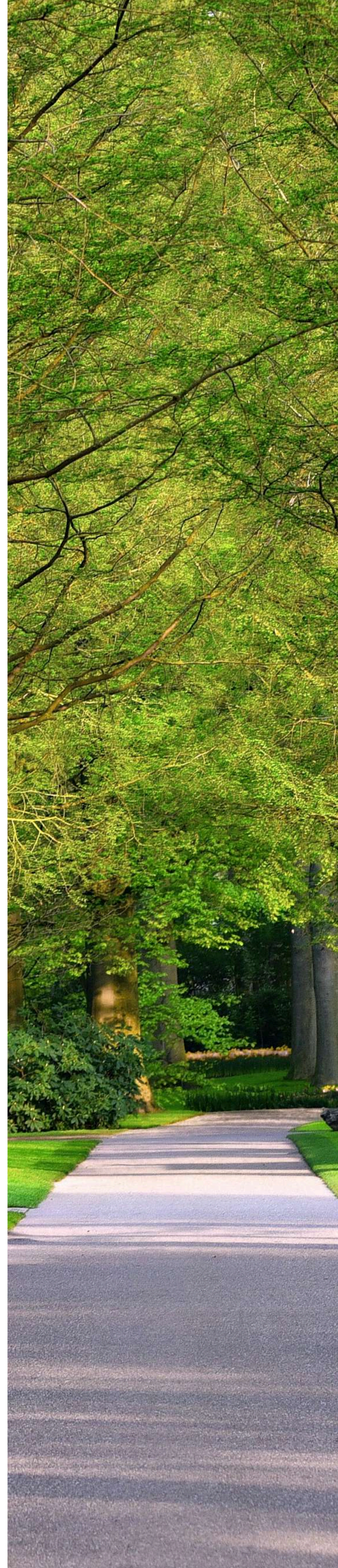
"Oh, really? Then I would like peace on earth, food for everyone, and a home for every stranger."

"Just tell us how much of each you want," said the angel. "We sell the seeds of everything."

(Chassidic story)

14

The seed is sometimes also compared to Jesus himself. Plant Jesus in your heart, and a tree will grow.



Lectio Divina on the Mustard Seed

Peace of Mind



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, once again, we delve into a reading from the Bible. Listen to the text attentively and feel where the words touch your life. In doing so, you receive the text as spiritual nourishment. Connect with where the text resonates with you and contemplate further on those thoughts or feelings. It may be helpful to make notes.

Today's reading is about the kingdom of heaven being like a small seed.

Lectio 5—Matthew 13:31–32 (NIV):

“He told them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.’”

Contemplating the Light

Light a candle and pray: “Open my eyes in this light, so I know where to plant a seed.”

Reflecting on Your Own Heart

Become aware of your breathing. Honestly tell God how you are feeling.

Reflecting on God's Word

Read and reflect on Matthew 13:31–32. Which word or passage stands out to you? Does the text prompt you to do something?

Standing Still and Resting in God

Present your thoughts to God. Then, be silent to be in God's presence. What does He have to say to you?

Shared Thoughts

Matthew 13:31—*“...and planted in his field...”*

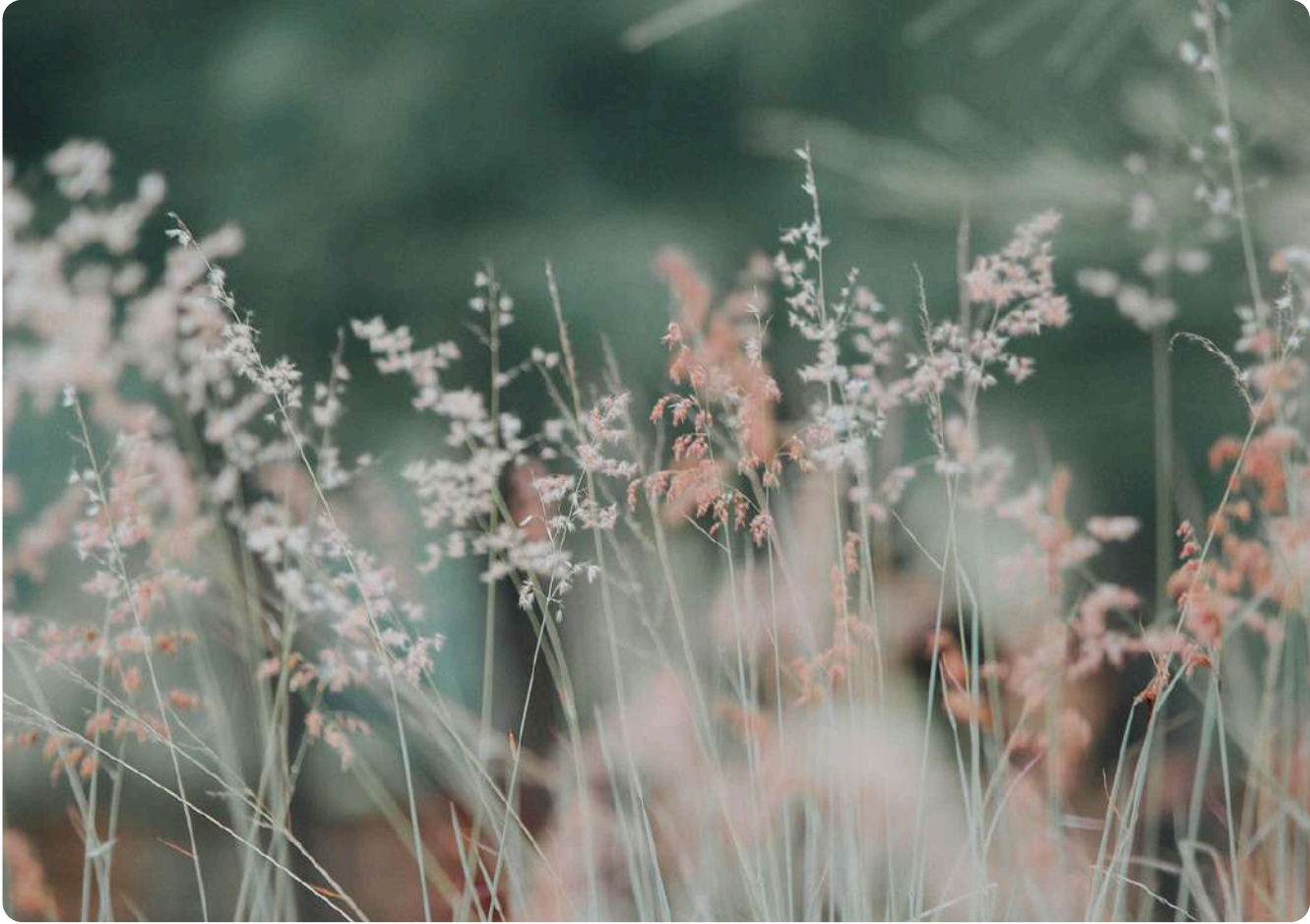
This is one of my favorite passages when it comes to self-care and germination. The small interjection, “and planted in his field,” makes all the difference here. Often, we compare the kingdom of heaven to a seed that we plant in everyone else's field except our own. It's simple. Someone took a seed and planted it in their own field. They didn't immediately scatter that seed into the world but allowed it to germinate in their own area.

This shows how growth takes time—the fact that space is needed for something to flourish is entirely part of the kingdom of heaven. Eventually, the seed grew into a plant, and others could also enjoy it. The seed is sometimes also compared to Jesus himself. Plant Jesus in your heart, and a tree will grow.

What are you sowing in your own field?

How are you tending to the soil to bring it to life?

How much time are you giving yourself for that?



Who are you inviting to ultimately enjoy life under this mustard tree?

Moving from Silence into the World

Extinguish the candle flame. Close with your own prayer or pray:

Plant your life in me

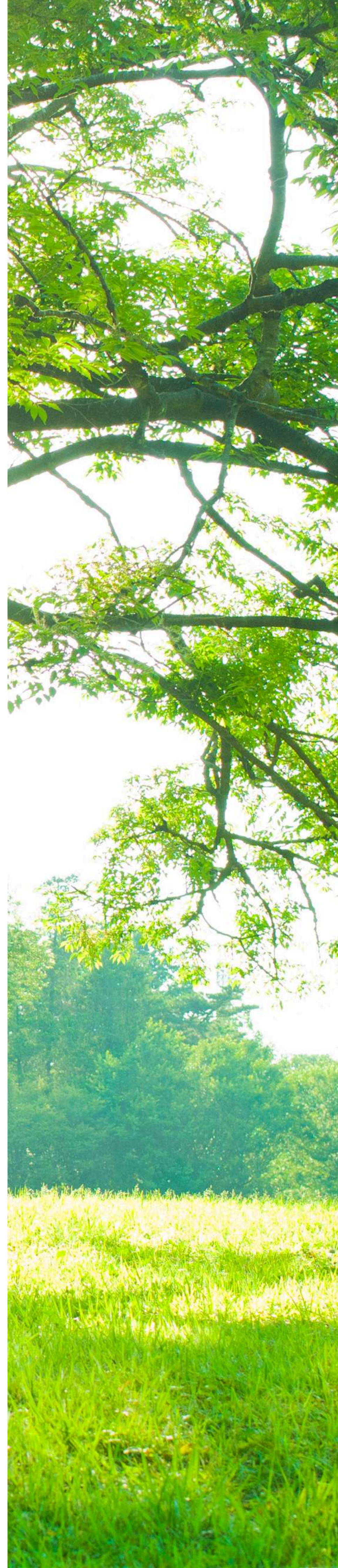
Free me from striving

and make me aware of your germinating power within me.

https://youtu.be/YJlaleuEQ_Q

15

In your own life: What healthy relationships do you have in your life? How do you keep them alive?



Lessons on Sowing and Rich Soil

Peace of Mind



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, we won't be taking the bus, but I'll walk to a piece of farmland near my hometown. I'm glad you're joining me again!

We've talked about sowing for two days now. Everything that becomes significant starts small.

Here on this land, I will be joining around a hundred others as herenboeren—or community farmers—in the coming years. This means that we, along with a few hundred people, have purchased a piece of land. Under the guidance of a farmer we hire, we will sow the land and learn together how to cultivate the soil using regenerative agriculture methods.

What is regenerative agriculture? It's a form of agriculture where soil life is central, and the goal is to work with the seasons and the elements. Pesticides are hardly needed anymore because plants naturally cooperate with fungi and bacteria. Plant residues are not cleared away but used to build up organic material in the soil.

The first time I read about this form of agriculture was in the book *Rijke Grond* (Rich Soil) by Gabe Brown. I was immediately enthusiastic. Why? I see that these natural lessons for the soil ALSO work for the mental health of people, which is something I'm involved in. It's wonderful to see that God's healthy principles are reflected everywhere. I believe that applying these principles in your life leads to more natural peace.

It's been raining, so I've put on my boots.

Because of the heavy clay soil here, my feet are twice their normal size after a walk. I wonder what it will be like to sow in this clay soil, and I'm delighted that we'll be trying it out with a very large group!

Here are some lessons we can learn from regenerative agriculture practices:

1. Take time for natural growth in your own context. Don't be afraid of failure—create your own test plots.

Experimenting with test plots is the first lesson I've learned from this form of agriculture. Many test plots are used to discover which crops cross-pollinate best. It doesn't matter if it fails because then you try again, and in the process, underground root activity enriches the soil. In your own life, *where do you allow yourself room to experiment?*

2. It's not the harvest or the yield but the soil that is your gold.

Your soil is your gold! You can already see this in the Bible passage from yesterday. Did you know that 95% of life on land is IN the soil? That's why it's important to restore air and nutrients to the soil. Mentally, this works the same way. Often, you focus on external circumstances, but what lies beneath the surface is essential! Healthy soil consists of many roots and connections. In your own life: *What healthy relationships do you have in your life? How do you keep them alive?*



your thoughts, feelings, and deeper needs. Are you interested? Check it out here:

www.mirjamvandervegt.nl/rustinjehoofd.

3. Everything has value. Utilize everything according to its own value and promote cross-pollination.

Every plant and every animal has its own value. Even if a plant doesn't quite make it above ground, it has already formed roots underground that nurture a rich soil life. The same goes for your own life. Every connection, every circumstance has had an effect on your soil. Appreciate its value; everything works together for good.

I can imagine that if you've experienced terrible things in your life, you may feel indignation or anger. Why should everything be valuable? First of all, take that feeling seriously. Some things should never have happened. However, I believe that when you bring even that into the light, it can become valuable. It should never have happened—it wasn't good, and it wasn't fair. But in the light, God turns it around. I don't say that lightly. Sometimes, it takes time. With your story, you can be a light to many. If that's not the case yet, continue to lie in the light. Bless your cursed land, like the monks on Holy Island, and see what can happen. In your own life: *What can you appreciate from the past?*

Additional Note:

I've approached peace of mind over these three days from the mindset of a farmer whose work is never done. Of course, there's much more to say. Together with a brain trainer, I've developed the **"Peace of Mind, Space in Your Heart, Love in Your Relationships"** training, where we delve into

16

Justice is this: giving someone space to shine their light. When you allow each other to shine, there will be peace.



No Rest Without Justice

No Rest Without Justice



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, I'm walking along the Amsterdam–Rhine Canal in Kanaleneiland, Utrecht. I lived here for almost 20 years and learned a lot about justice. I'm on my way to see Asad. He's a tailor by trade, and I'm going to have a dress made by him.

According to the Bible, there is no rest without justice. As we read in Micah 2:9–10, “You have evicted women from their pleasant homes and forever stripped their children of all that God would give them. Up! Begone! This is no longer your land and home, for you have filled it with sin and ruined it completely.”

Justice is often a serious word because it's contrasted with injustice. Mourning often accompanies injustice, and there are heartbreaking stories worth listening to. Asad has such a story. For years, he had no right to exist in the Netherlands. Even now, he struggles to make ends meet.

Now, he could keep telling that story, but that wouldn't do justice to Asad. Because there's more.

You do justice to Asad when you also see what brings him joy. When there is injustice, a part of the joy is often taken away. That's why justice doesn't just mean listening to someone's story but also bringing joy back into someone's life. I know it brings joy to Asad when he gets to make a dress for me, and I pay him a fair price for it. And I also derive a lot of pleasure from it! Justice to Asad's craft, justice to the planet because this

garment is ethically produced, and we'll both be beaming afterward. Justice can be that simple. When it comes to bringing justice, I often look for where there is joy.

In Isaiah 58:10–11 (NIV) it says:

“And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday ... You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.”

Justice is this: giving someone space to shine their light. When you allow each other to shine, there will be peace.

Where can you do justice to someone today?

I believe that in a world full of injustice, there will always be a holy unrest.

This is the holy unrest that moves us to bring justice, light, and life.

And there's something else important: you don't have to save the world—it's already saved!

I forgot that when I lived here in Kanaleneiland—there was always something more to do or someone else to help. As if I had to save the



world. I remember being exhausted from all the worrying. I still wanted to visit a poor woman from the food bank, but I couldn't manage it anymore. So, I lay down on the couch and asked God to encourage that woman because I was too tired to go to her. Then the doorbell rang. I opened the door, and what do you know: the woman had come to me. I didn't even have to leave the house; she just came to see me. I found that a remarkable occurrence and decided from then on that I wanted to live more like that, trusting that God will bring to my path what I should do if I open myself up to it.

More about that tomorrow, in a special Bible passage! See you tomorrow!

17

Your personal restoration is never just for yourself, but for the nations.



Lectio Divina on a Tree of Righteousness

No Rest without Justice



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, we make space again for Bible reading. We'll go through the text slowly, and you'll read or listen to the text attentively, feeling where the words resonate in your life. Try to connect with the parts of the text that speak to you. It can be helpful to make notes during this process.

Today's reading is from Isaiah 61:1–4 and is about a tree of righteousness.

Lectio 6—Isaiah 61:1–4 (NIV)

*"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,*

*to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,*

*and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendor.
They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;*

*they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations."*

Reflection on the Light

Light a candle and pray: *"You proclaim the year of grace, You bring the light. Let me bloom like a tree in Your light."*

Reflection on Your Heart

Become aware of your breathing. Honestly tell God how you're feeling.

Reflection on God's Word

Read and contemplate Isaiah 61:1–4. Which word or part stands out to you? Does the text prompt you to do something?

Reflection and Resting in God

Present your thoughts to God. Then be still in His presence. What does He have to say to you?

Shared Thoughts

Isaiah 61:3—*"They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor."*

What a mighty promise for the weak! Do you feel defeated and captive? Are you mourning? Do you have a spirit of despair? Do you long for justice?



Have you tried hard to seek and bring it yourself, but it seems like you're empty-handed? Here comes redemption.

In this passage, it's Jesus who proclaims a year of grace. And He plants you by living water, to glorify His name. You become an oak of righteousness. You will rebuild ruined places. You will be restored, you will be blessed. This verse clearly shows the sequence: first, Him. He plants. He brings the oil of joy to you. Then you and us. Your personal restoration is never just for yourself, but for the nations. This passage also invites surrender. Shall we allow ourselves to be planted by the Lord? Or do we mainly plant ourselves?

There is delight in you

that does what is right.

You are not forgotten.

You are planted for flourishing.

Going from Silence into the World

Extinguish the candle flame. Close with your own prayer or say:

Here I am

longing for Your oil of joy

plant me by living streams

of righteousness.

Adorn me with the ornament of Your love

clothe me with joy

and thus I will enter the ruined cities.

To the glory of Your name.

<https://youtu.be/7Fqy3QYf26A>

18

What's worse than being blind?
To have sight without a vision.



Learning from the Righteous

No Rest without Justice



[Listen to the audio!](#)

I'm glad you're walking alongside me. I'm outside, and it's cold now, so together is better than alone. When it's so cold, you're tempted to stay indoors. As I stepped out despite the cold just now, I realized that people who step out despite difficulties are admirable. Those who, despite the discomfort, still go outside and seek the light.

When it comes to justice, you're often tempted to close your eyes. There is so much injustice! Why let it affect you? It's easier to ignore it. Of course, you don't have to save the whole world, but I consider those who want to remain affected by injustice oaks of righteousness. I'm fortunate to know some very inspiring examples in my life, and I want to highlight one person. I'm not looking to put someone on a pedestal, but I think the people we admire say something about ourselves. So, at the end of our walk, I'm curious about who inspires you. Feel free to let me know. Who inspires you says a lot about yourself. You often admire what you recognize deep inside, but what is sometimes still hidden.

In the capital city of Harare in Zimbabwe lives Bishop Ancelimo Magaya. I regularly exchange voice messages with him because he is blind. The bishop dreams of a corruption-free country. As a young boy, he was already moved by the injustice in his country. "If I make myself available for justice, peace will naturally follow," is his conviction. He founded an organization that advocates for fair elections. The movement is so successful—and therefore threatening to the established powers—Bishop Ancelimo has been

imprisoned several times. Imprisonment means abuse, intimidation, and poor hygienic conditions in cold cells with dirty blankets or no blankets at all.

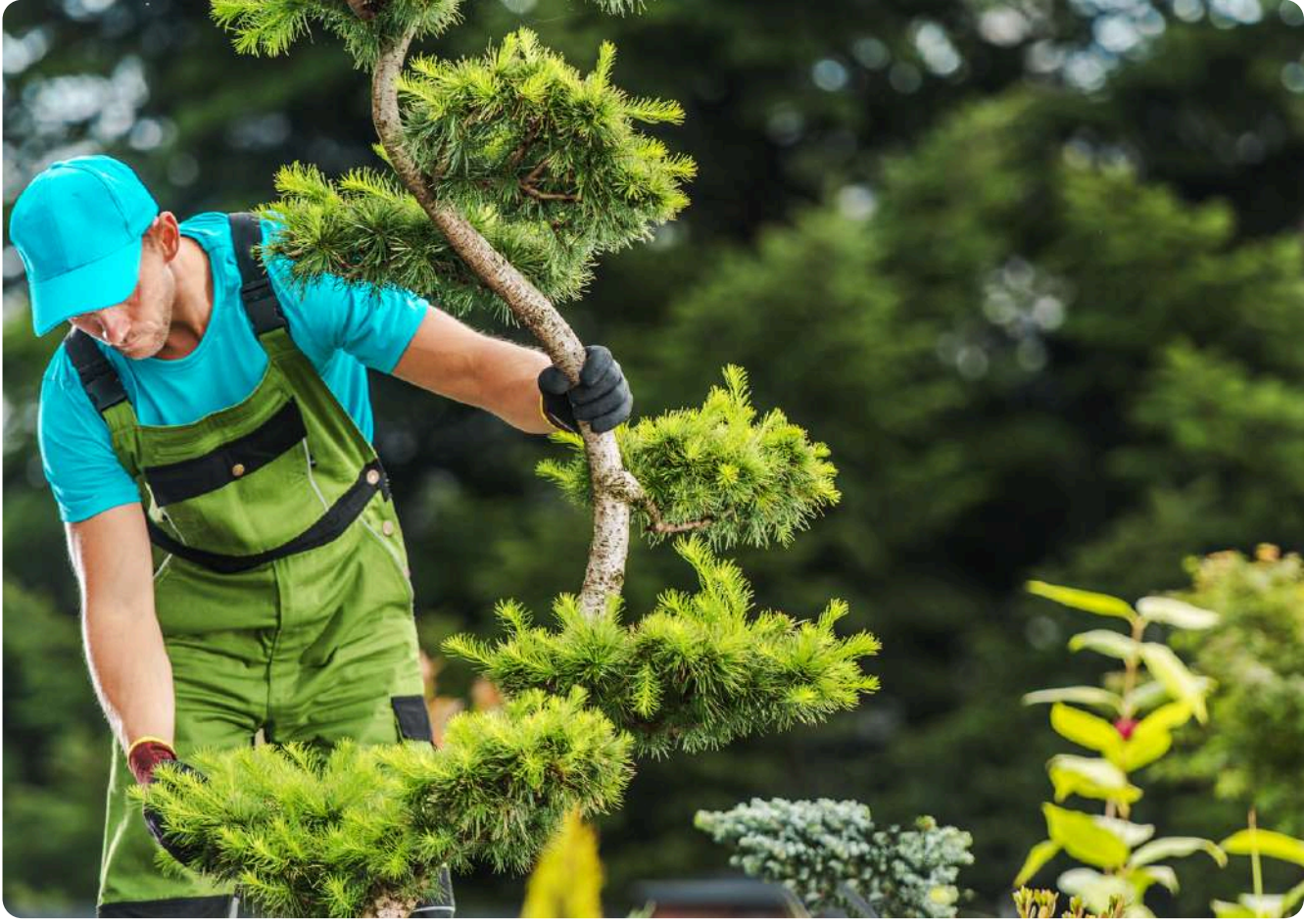
Sometimes, people from the organization disappear without a trace. There are stories of fellow brothers being doused in acid. In addition, there are other challenges. The bishop is supported by his wife everywhere he goes, though his three children are not happy that their father does such dangerous work. Bishop Ancelimo has a lot to lose, and yet he has made his entire life available for one thing: justice.

When I first met him, I quickly forgot he was blind. I have rarely met such a sparkling figure with such a steadfast spirit. He says about himself: *"What's worse than being blind? To have sight without a vision."*

How does he keep going? Every morning, he seeks God's revelations in silence, writing them down. Then, when it's difficult, or when he's imprisoned, he can remember the words that came to him in good times. I find that immensely inspiring. His story compels me to confront discomfort and not just stay in my own comfort zone.

I'm curious as to what your examples are. It doesn't have to be such a heroic person as Bishop Ancelimo. A gentle friend who can ask probing questions well can also bring justice.

Who is your example when it comes to justice?



What qualities does this person have that you would like to practice?

If you think all this justice stuff doesn't fit into your schedule... no worries: tomorrow, we'll talk about finding peace in our schedule! So there's room for these kinds of things.
Until tomorrow!

19

When you take kairos time, you live from the core. You experience life as a possibility, and you have space to simply receive what God wants to give you at that moment.



Looking Towards the Future

Working and living from God's rest



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Last month, my schedule was quite full. Sometimes, you look at your schedule, and you just know you need some free time. Time where minutes don't matter, and you can completely immerse yourself in the here and now.

Come, let's get on the bus. Let's seek out the emptiness at the Lek, where the river has dried up. Geese honking everywhere. I'll set up my chair on the side with a view of the dry riverbed. Care to sit beside me? This feels like kairos time.

There are two words for time: chronos and kairos. When we live according to chronos time, our activities are determined by the clock. Life is the chronology of things—one thing happens after another, and we set our own achievable goals and assign a time to them. This is a linear way of thinking—on a timeline that we set for ourselves. In her book, *When the Heart Waits*, Sue Monk Kid says the following about this time: "The ticking sound of the clock takes up residence in our being. Our hearts march to the beat of the clock. We march to the beat of a strange pacemaker."

In contrast, kairos time is something I also call "natural love" time. That's the time needed to ripen and bloom. The time where you can concentrate for as long as something demands it of you. When you take kairos time, you live from the core. You experience life as a possibility, and you have space to simply receive what God wants to give you at that moment. It's full and real time that invites you to learn playfully and also takes space to let things grow and mature.

That may sound very nice, but how do you do that with a full schedule? Here are a few things that have helped me:

1. Your to-do list as your best friend

Treat your to-do list as your best friend. Would you like it if a friend was constantly on your tail? I would quickly tire of such a "friend." Every friendship needs space. When my friend and I take a few days off together, we also have moments of silence and relaxation. Sometimes, one of us lounges by the pool while the other takes a walk. We don't necessarily do everything together. That gives breathing room in a relationship.

Treat your to-do list in the same way: give it some breathing room. Remember that you and your to-do list are likely to embark on a lifelong friendship. How do you want to ruin that "relationship"? It can be quite surprising when you approach your to-do list in this way. Have you ever gone out to dinner together? To the museum? Where can you take your to-do list to have some fun... and space?

2. Ensure a clear overview of your schedule

If you don't have an overview of your schedule, you can't play with it properly. Does your schedule have you in its grip, or do you have your schedule in your grip? Realize that you are the one in control. So, if your schedule is a mess, you can seek help to get it in order. When my work



expanded, I sought help to organize and tidy up my schedule. I couldn't manage it anymore with loose notes.

Take control of your schedule, so you can then be flexible and change it as you need it.

3. Guard the spaces in your schedule.

Everything that grows and blooms needs space. That's why it's essential to also guard that space in your schedule. Put some space for rest in your schedule first. Take silence as a starting point rather than an afterthought. I know I need time to reflect to give the world my best. So, I schedule empty space and time to walk. I also need space to lay my schedule before God. What does He want me to do in the coming year? I pray for that every summer so that I can rearrange my schedule from January if necessary.

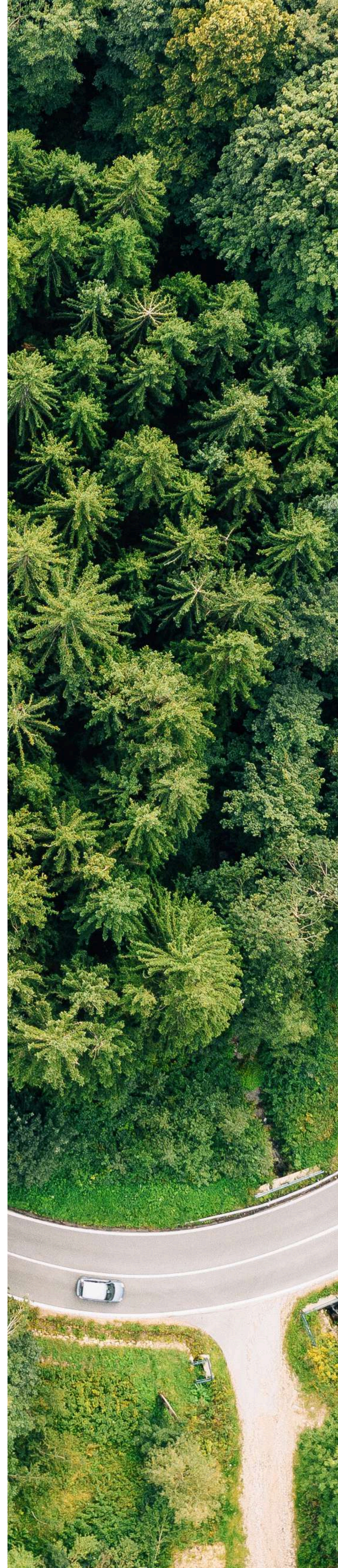
4. Start living with your desire on the agenda.

I've been enjoying using the "one word" practice for years now. It's when you choose a guiding word for the year, setting the tone for personal growth, priorities, and decision-making—a word that colors and guides my agenda for the year.

Your word could be "love" or "joy," and even "courage" or "peace." It doesn't matter what the word is, but choose something that speaks deeply to you and guides your goals this year. I will put the word at the top of my to-do list so I know what I can prioritize, and what's most important to me.

20

Let every tree you see be a reflection of what is to come. They show something of eternal value. Let every fruit taste like a preview of more. Let every healing oil make you look forward expectantly to what is to come.



Lectio Divina on Promises for the Future

Working and Living from God's rest



[Listen to the audio!](#)

Today, we have space again for Bible reading. We'll go through the text slowly, and you'll read or listen to the text attentively. Feel where the words touch your life. It can be nice to make notes here.

Today's reading from Revelation 22:1-5 is about the trees and God's promises for the future.

Lectio 7—Revelation 22:1-5 (NIV)

"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month.

And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever."

Pausing in the light

Light a candle and pray: "God, You are my light."

Pausing in your own heart.

Become aware of your breathing. Honestly tell

God how you're feeling.

Pausing in God's Word

Read and contemplate Revelation 22:1-5. Which word or part stands out for you? Does the text call you to something?

Pausing and resting in God

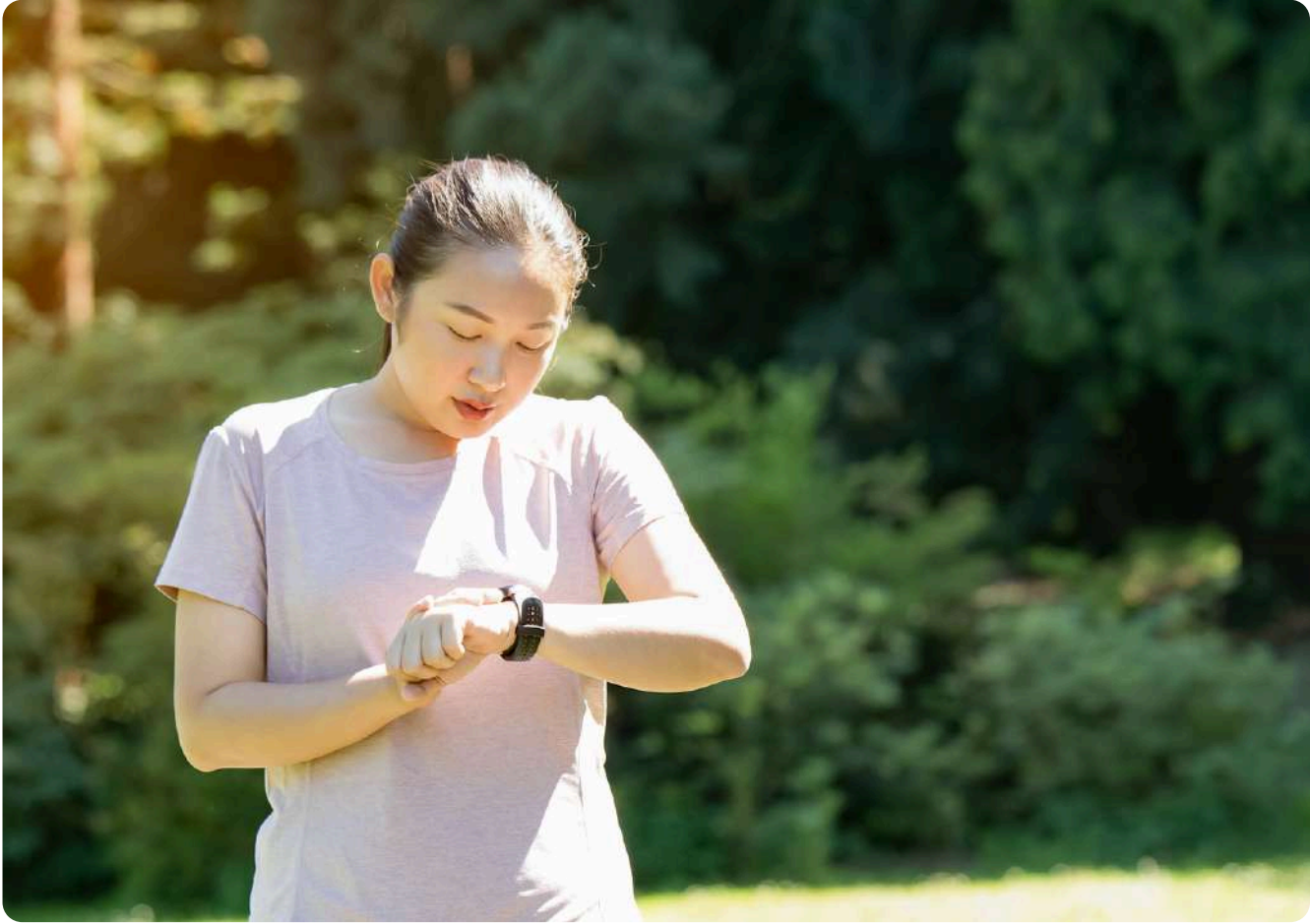
Present your thoughts to God. Then, be silent to be in God's presence. What does He have to say to you?

Shared thoughts

Revelation 22:2—"...On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations."

A mighty tree with various fruits. How would these fruits taste? Leaves that bring healing, just as the oils from leaves of plants do now. But in that time, these leaves even brought healing to nations. The trees are given again to humans here. From an earthly paradise at the beginning, we end up in a heavenly garden where your eyes fall short. There will be healing.

I once heard an allegorical story about an artist who spent his whole life trying to paint a tree he had once dreamed of. He considered himself a worthless artist and was never satisfied with the result. When his work hung in museums,



countless people came to see it and were touched by it. After his death, he walked through heaven and suddenly saw “his” tree standing there. He was deeply moved and now knew what he had been doing all his life. He had wanted to capture a glimpse of eternal beauty on canvas. Now he knew: I have spent my life well, even though I felt like a worthless artist. Every brushstroke was a glimpse of heaven.

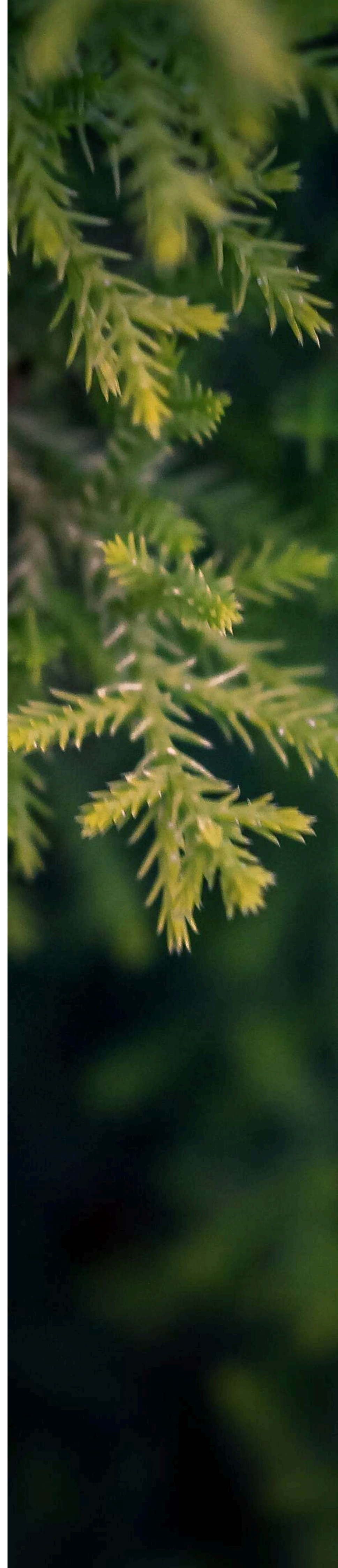
Let every tree you see be a reflection of what is to come. They show something of eternal value. Let every fruit taste like a preview of more. Let every healing oil make you look forward expectantly to what is to come.

Going from silence into the world
 Extinguish the candle flame. Close with your own
 prayer or pray:
 Enlighten my eyes
 so I can see without time
 and discover everywhere:
 here blows a breeze of eternity.

<https://youtu.be/cIWgloq48AM>

21

When you stand by God's stream or are transplanted there, your leaves will not wither, even in a dry season. You bear fruit in due time.



Moving Hopefully Through Life

Working and Living from God's rest



Listen to the audio!

Today marks the last day of our shared journey. As we walk, we move towards a future full of hope. A future where healing and wholeness exist, as we read yesterday. Let the future color your day instead of the past.

I pray that these exercises will help you experience nature and God in a new way today.

An Exercise in Receiving

Take a walk and look around you. Usually, our eyes see the things they choose to latch onto. Often, we approach our surroundings rather than the surroundings coming to us. Slow down and walk at a pace where things seem to come to you. Walk in receptivity and trust that nature or the environment around you can offer you something unexpectedly.

Suddenly, there's a mushroom, an ant on the ground, or a tiny tree that you might have otherwise passed by. You can also do this exercise with others and share afterwards what you have "received." Ask God to open your eyes to what He offers you in daily life as well.

Walk slower, become quieter:

life already contains so much

before we "make" something of it.

Receive the Small and Discover the Big Story

Find a square meter in the forest and sit there for fifteen minutes. Experience what this does to you. Try to focus your attention on all the little things you see and use multiple senses. You don't have to go anywhere—you're already there. Are you still restless? Then, stay silent longer and discover how your breathing slowly calms down.

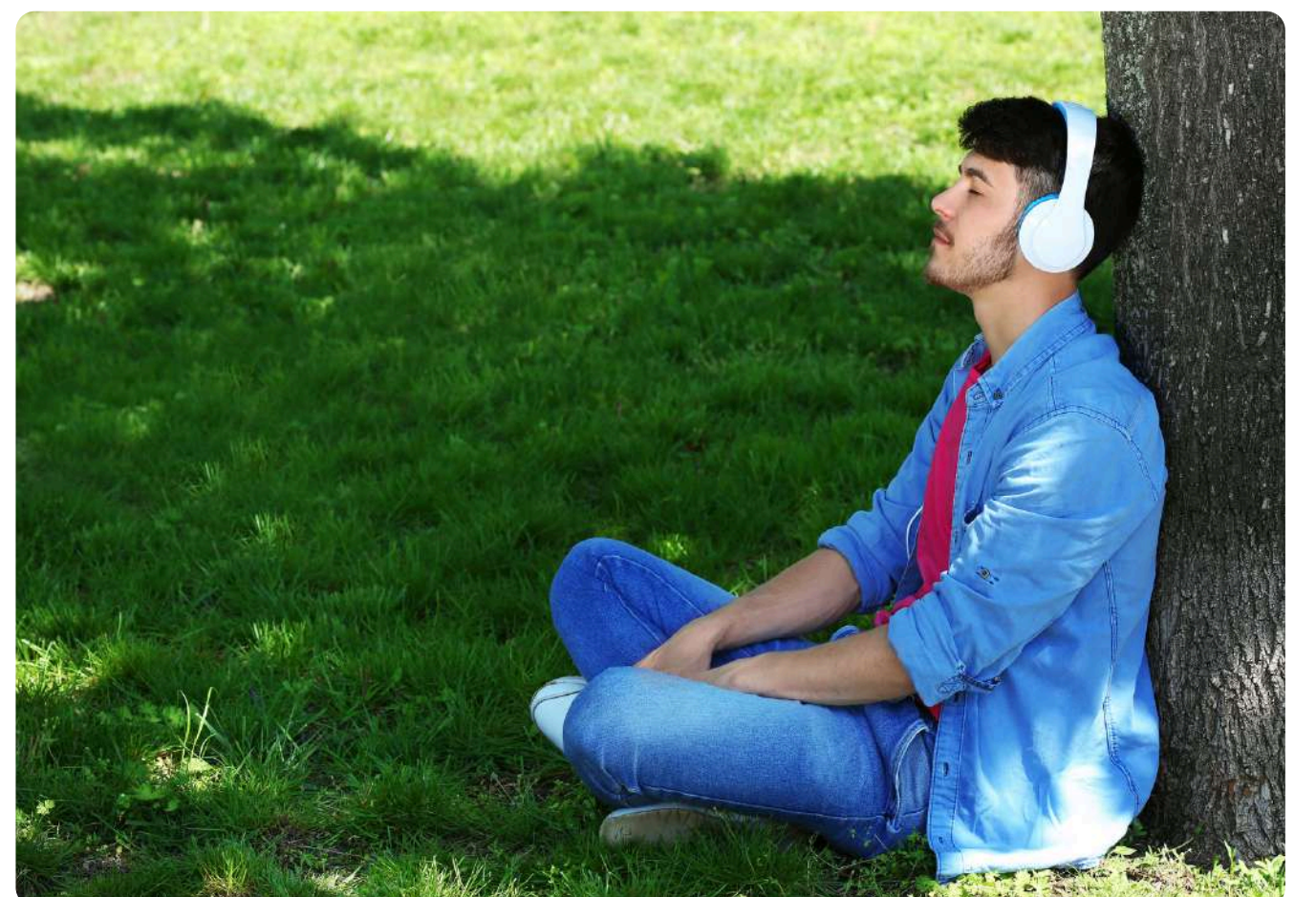
Turn Your Head Towards the Sky

As you walk this week, try looking up more often. Look towards the horizon and thus broaden your perspective. People who do this are happier and experience more space.

Want to Learn More about Rest and Nature?

Take a look at ikzoekrust.net for more articles and tips about rest.

Would you like to receive more Lectio Divina sessions about trees? Through www.lerenvanbomen.nl, you can receive 43 more



meditations about trees with the accompanying book, Learning from Trees.

You're also warmly invited to our retreats, training days, and online courses. In those, we search together for good rest and self-care in your life. You can find all the information at www.mirjamvandervegt.nl