ME TIME

Lanecia A. Rouse

“In the Habit” session for use with devozine meditations for July 15–21, 2013.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

“I was late, not five or ten minutes late, but close to thirty minutes late. About five minutes away from the office, I realized that in the rush to gather the things necessary to complete my to-do list, I had left one important item for my personal wellness at home. I needed to make a U-turn and go back home. Frustrated, overwhelmed, and exhausted, I whipped a U-turn and turned onto a street I had not traveled before. Praying while driving, my eyes caught an old two-storied white house with the most amazing porch and one empty chair. I had to stop; something refused to let me proceed. I parked my car and began to cry. I looked at the rusty blue antique chair on the porch, and I heard a still soft voice, inviting me to sit and rest awhile: “Come to me, Lanecia, and I will give you rest. I know you are weary, broken, and tired. Come to me, be still, and know.”

“Way too often I get lost in the everyday flow of life—serving, doing, meeting the needs of others, and achieving. I forget how important it is to carve out time to be still, to allow solitude to refresh my soul, to tend to the needs that I have as God’s beloved. Doing and giving are pretty natural for me these days. Being and receiving take a bit of intentionality during this season of the journey. It takes practice and mindfulness to free ourselves to care for ourselves and to commune with God and the world around us. ‘Me time’ is important. It creates balance in our lives and in ourselves. In solitude, we discover who we are called to be and what lies deep within us that is longing to come out. Meaningful ‘me time’ also nurtures a healthy, more life-giving relationship with ourselves, others, and God.

“In her article ‘The Call of Solitude’ (http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/199802/the-call-solitude), Ester Buchholz writes:

What’s really blocking our joy in relationships, our creativity, and our peace of mind? One surprising answer, in this age of alienation, is a lack of solitude. Meaningful alone time, it turns out, is a powerful need and a necessary tonic in today’s rapid-fire world. Indeed, solitude actually allows us to connect to others in a far richer way. We live in a society that worships independence yet deeply fears alienation: our era is sped-up and overcorrected.
“Grace is found in communion with God in prayerful solitude. For me, solitude is sometimes sitting in front of an abandoned house with a white porch and a blue chair, listening in silence for what God is saying. Sometimes solitude is going to a film, a museum, a concert, or an art festival, conversing with God through the encounter of beauty and life around me. Sometimes it means setting up a blank canvas in the studio and conversing with God through the creation of a new work of art. Every now and then, solitude is sitting and resting in the grace of the world around me, where I am free.” —Lanecia

Enjoy “The Peace of Wild Things” from The Selected Works of Wendell Berry (see page 36 at http://books.google.com/books?id=mj3WyhXqcMC&printsec=copyright&source=gbs_pub_info_r#v=onepage&q&f=false)

MEET THE WRITER
Lanecia A. Rouse is my name. I am beloved. I receive most of my days trying to discover the implications of being beloved as I live in the tension of "the already but not yet" with people living on and off the downtown streets of Houston, Texas, on the campus of St. John’s Downtown. I am an artist: photographer, painter, musician, and writer. (Check out my blog at http://larart.wordpress.com/) I am learning daily how to play and to embrace the freedom to love and be loved by others. Currently, I am serving as the project manager of The Art Project, Houston, a therapeutic art and self-empowerment project of the Bread of Life, Inc. (http://www.theartprojecthouston.org/) Before moving to Houston in March 2011, I served in youth ministry for thirteen years, mostly received with the brilliant, bursting beautiful youth of Belmont United Methodist Church in Nashville, Tennessee.

STUFF YOU WILL NEED
- Bible
- 8-by-10” canvas boards or cardboard pieces
- 8-by-10” notebooks or composition books
- images from magazines, spread out on one table in the room (Some of the images may be words.) Prepare the images ahead of time or have group members choose their own images from magazines you provide.
- markers, colored pencils, acrylic paints (red, yellow, blue, white, and black) and/or crayons
- glue sticks
- a candle and matches
- paper and pens

PLUGGED IN

*Solitude is not an absence of energy or action, as some believe, but is rather a boon of wild provisions transmitted to us from the soul. Purposeful solitude is both palliative and preventative. It is used to prevent fatigue and weariness.* —Clarissa Pinkola Estes

“Me time” is essential for our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical being. In solitude, like Jesus, we become more aware of God’s will for our lives. We become more aware of the life of Christ within us so that we can walk, closely connected with God. “Me time” creates space for us
to reconnect with the source of God’s kingdom, which is a kingdom of love, mercy, hope, imagination, creativity, freedom, and grace.

Below are some resources you may find helpful as you shape and guide conversations about the importance of incorporating me time in the monthly, weekly, and daily rhythms of our lives.

**Books**


**Online Articles**

+ “What is Solitude?” by Hara Estroff Marano; *Psychology Today* ([http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200308/what-is-solitude](http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/200308/what-is-solitude))

+ “Everyday Discipline,” by Adam Smith; *Relevant Magazine* ([http://www.relevantmagazine.com/next/blog/6-main-slideshow/226](http://www.relevantmagazine.com/next/blog/6-main-slideshow/226))


**CHECKING IN**
A great daily practice is receiving time to be in prayer for those you are called to lead and for the ministry you share with them. Before group members arrive, pray for your time together, for those who will participate, for those who cannot be present, and for the life of your church community.

As group members arrive, welcome them, extending a special welcome to those joining you for the first time. Invite everyone to take a seat. Then ask this question:

**When I say, “Me time is important for your daily routine,” what thoughts or emotions come to mind?**

Summarize the responses, naming some of the thoughts and feelings people mentioned.
Introduce the session, saying: “Carving out time to commune with God is important. We often get lost in the everyday flow of life and forget to be still, to allow solitude to refresh our souls, and to tend to the needs we have as God’s beloved. There are many ways to shape our me time. In this session, we will look at how Jesus received time by himself and what key points we should remember as we seek to cultivate me time in our lives.”

EXPLORING THE WORD
Scripture: Luke 5:12–16


Say: “In the scripture, we catch a glimpse of Jesus’ healing and restoring both other people and himself. Crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed, but Jesus withdrew into the wilderness and prayed. The wilderness was not only the place of Jesus’ greatest challenges, but also a place where he was restored by remembering and aligning himself with the will of God. Alone with God and his thoughts, he prayed to continue to live within the will of God. Perhaps Jesus went to the wilderness to remember who he was and to sort through his thoughts and feelings.

“Withdrawing to be alone and to pray was not a one-time thing for Jesus. He was often busy giving to others. Afterward, he often withdrew to receive time in prayer and communion with God. His relationship with God was essential to his life; and Jesus carved out me time to be still and to rest.”

Why was solitude in the wilderness significant to Jesus’ life?
Why is me time important for our lives?
What is the difference is between solitude and loneliness?
How often do you receive time alone with God?
What do we need to let go of or how do we need to change our priorities in order to cultivate more me time?

What are some of the ways you receive or can we receive time with God? (Encourage creativity. You may need to offer some personal examples to help them think of non-traditional ways of being with God.)

Invite participants to a time of creativity, prayer, and solitude. Provide each person with a piece of canvas or cardboard and a notebook. Have available magazines or images cut from magazines and a variety of art supplies. Explain that each person is going to create a cover for his or her journal. Encourage group members to spend some time reflecting on what brings them joy and makes them feel alive. Then ask each person to create a cover that is an expression of life and joy. The journals will provide a way for group members to converse with God through words and art and will give them a way to direct their thoughts and feelings in times of solitude.

Allow 20–30 minutes for people to make their journal covers. If some people finish before others, invite them to begin writing in their journals. Once everyone has completed his or her journal cover, bring the group together. Invite volunteers to show their work.
Be sure to encourage group members to think of a time each day, or even once a week, when they will withdraw to the “wilderness” for prayerful communion with God through journaling, prayer, and reflection.

SHARING IN PRAYER

Invite people to form a circle. Light a candle in the center of the circle.

Provide pens and paper. Invite everyone to reflect in silence on the following questions and to write down their answers.

During the session, when did I experience the presence of God?
What gave me life? joy?

Provide an opportunity for volunteers to talk about their responses to the two questions. Then invite the group to pray as you say:

“Creating and Re-creating God, may your blessings await us at every turn:
Give us eyes to see, ears to hear, minds to discern, and hearts to receive your blessings
with gratitude and awareness of your steadfast love that endures forever.
As we follow the way of Jesus Christ,
help us to become comfortable with receiving time alone with you.
Teach us that solitude is a gift.
May we continue to awaken to the fullness of life in Christ as we walk in your grace.
Amen.”

TAKING IT FURTHER

Consider introducing your community to the practice of praying the labyrinth. If your community is already familiar with the practice, consider doing an entire program in which the youth pray the labyrinth and then spend some time in solitude as they respond to the experience by creating art or writing in their journals.

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