

10 Minutes for 10 Days:

reducing stress & finding more of Christ's peace



BY LAURA L. SMITH

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The title 'Introduction' is written in a large, white, elegant script font across the middle of the image.

Introduction

An invitation to slow down

A year ago my life was hectic. I had headaches all the time, because I wasn't getting enough sleep. I loved all the things I was doing, but my calendar was scary full and I had no idea how to make it less so. I was cramming everything into the tiniest moments to try and fit it all in.

For example, I wave goodbye to my husband or kids as they're pulling out of our driveway. It's a lovely moment for this wife and mama's heart. But there's a weird timing issue. They head out to the garage. I walk to the front window. But when they enter their car there's always a few minutes of getting the right music, adjusting the temperature, buckling up, plugging an address in a Map Ap. I do all this when I get in a car, too. This could take one minute or eight--depending. So while the person I love is getting themselves situated in their car, I stand by the window.

I'm not good at standing idle, especially when there's so much to get done. So one day I thought to myself, wow, life hack, I can spend these waiting moments checking something off the list. I can respond to an email, send a text, or check the weather. And so I did. And then my person would pull out of the driveway and I'd pull myself away from my screen to wave while they honked and then bury myself back in the distraction. I wasn't even savoring this waving ritual that I invented. I was diluting this sweet moment by trying to squeeze one more thing in. It's not a huge awful deal, but it's just an example of the fractured fragmented frenzied way I was approaching life.

I've changed this particular thing. I now walk to the window and take a deep breath. I roll my shoulders back and root my feet into the ground. I pray for whoever is on their way out. I thank God for them and pray for their safe travels and for peace or focus or joy in the place they're headed. And it's wonderful. This is now a moment of gratitude, silence, and prayer instead of a digital dopamine distraction.

The waving is just one small peek at how my life was. Meals were rushed and a chore. Conversations cut short. I never lingered. I was always going on. To. The. Next. Thing. And still getting to bed late and rising with the roosters.

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The word "Introduction" is written in a large, white, cursive font across the middle of the image.

Introduction

And then a few things happened all at the same time. Because God works like that sometimes. I read John Mark Comer's book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* (I highly recommend) about slowing down our lives. I was also reading through the gospels in the Bible where Jesus keeps doing all this incredible, brilliant work AND having meaningful conversations, taking time to pray, finding moments of solitude. Jesus' life was so balanced. As I read along highlighting passages, I heard God saying, "Slow down. Simplify. Stop the crazy. Take a look at why, what, when and where you're going and doing. Take a look at how I did it. Come away with Me. Find rest."

Then the world shut down due to COVID-19. And all the games, meetings and practices on our family calendar were canceled. We had nowhere to go and no choice but to slow down. With newfound margin in my life I kept hearing God tell me, "Learn from this. Listen to Me. Are you really listening?"

I started noticing the things I enjoyed about the slower life, the things that had been hindering me from it before, the ways I connected with God, and the times I felt disconnected from Him. I started trying to figure out how I could integrate the good parts back into my life and keep the bad parts to a minimum should the world get busy again. Slowly it has. And I'm trying.

God wants us to hear Him, feel His presence, sense His love. He invites us into it daily. But most of the time our texts are buzzing in our pockets and the TV is on in the other room and we're grabbing a granola bar and shoving it in our mouths on our way to our next destination, so we're not hearing Him. Or feeling Him. Or experiencing the goodness He has for us over all the noise.

This ten-day study is a quick and simple way to hear God better, sense Him more fully. There's nothing hard or original here. Just some easy steps modeled by Jesus to cleanse our lives of some things getting in the way of feeling Christ's peace.

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The word "Introduction" is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center of the image.

Introduction

I'm going to go through it with you, because I want to be aware of the noise and the silence in my life--the things God calls me to produce, create and get done and the ways He invites me to put them down.

We're going to spend ten minutes for ten days simplifying our lives to better connect with God. They're as easy as praying for someone as they pull out of the driveway instead of immediately grabbing our phones.

Feel free to repeat any days you feel are important or impactful. Spend more than ten minutes if you like, or do more than the ten things suggested, or start over again as soon as you're finished. If you need to take a day off mid-way, that's okay. Give yourself grace. Just pick up where you left off and try not to skip any of the days. They're all important pieces that fit together.

This is your journey with Jesus. Listen to Him as you go.

Make notes of what you're learning, what you sense God is telling you in this process. Write out verses or prayers, jot down what you did on each day and how it made you feel. Maybe attach a receipt, ticket, photo to the page. Draw. Doodle. Whatever comes to mind.

I'm praying for you as you go through this study. I'm praying you'll feel restored, more connected to the person Jesus always designed you to be, one who laughs and loves and feels light and free like she/he has purpose, because you do. One who knows her/his value, because God calls you His prized possession. Who fully grasps that the Lord of the Universe created and loves them dearly, because He does.

Are you ready? Let's exhale our distractions and clutter and inhale the peace Jesus offers.

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The text 'Day 1' is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center of the image.

Day 1

Congratulations! You're on your way to some rest for your body, mind and soul.
Today's activity is simple, ready?

Spend 10 minutes in prayer

Why?

Because Jesus prayed. All the time. And He instructed the disciples (and us) to pray. This is how we get to talk to God! What better way to start our study designed to bring us closer to God than actually talking to Him?

Turn everything off. Silence your phone and flip it over. Better yet put it in another room. Find a time and place where no one will interrupt you. Set a timer. And just talk to Jesus for ten full minutes. Ask Him what He wants you to learn or discover over the next ten days. Thank Him for anything lovely in your life or ask for help with something you're struggling with. Pray for the people you love and for the people who rub you the wrong way. You could pray for your church, your workplace, our nation, our world, any big issues that tug at your heart. Tell Jesus the things you're scared or worried about. Share with Him something you're embarrassed about or wish you would have done differently. Allow some time for silence. Prayer is a conversation between you and God and if you talk the whole time, it will be hard for Him to get a word in.

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. —1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Journal prompt:

What did you talk to Jesus about? Did you find it difficult to fill the ten minutes or were you craving more time? How did you feel at the end of the ten minutes? Can you brainstorm ways you could fit chunks of focused prayer into your life on a more regular basis? Maybe daily?

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The text "Day 2" is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center of the image.

Day 2

Make a ten-minute phone call

Why?

Jesus took time for people. He called them out of trees and boats. He asked good questions and gave good answers. He looked them in the eye. And when He did, it changed them forever. Let's love others like our Savior loves us.

Is there someone who has been on your mind? A family member? A friend? Someone who you know is going through a hard time or transition? Someone you've been meaning to reach out to, but you've been "too busy"? Pray about who God might want you to call then set aside a full ten minutes to fully engage with them. Do not check messages, flip channels, or add items to your cart while chatting. Keep your focus on your conversation. Like Jesus, ask quality questions and give thoughtful responses. Simply love the person on the other end.

Love your neighbor as yourself. —Mark 12:31

Journal prompt:

Who did you call? If your person didn't answer, did you try someone else? What were some highlights of the conversation? How long did you talk? Did you find it tricky or easy to not do anything else while talking to them? Any other thoughts on the call?

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The text "Day 3" is overlaid in a large, white, cursive font.

Day 3

Give \$10 away

Why?

Because Jesus warned us about loving God and money. He said we couldn't even do it. It's not that money is bad, or that we shouldn't earn or spend it, it's just that we tend to make it too important. Jesus also asked us to care for the poor, widows, orphans, and the earth He created. Today's exercise helps us do both.

Take a minute to pray and ask Jesus to show you who you could give the money to. This could be paying for the person behind you in line at Chipotle or donating \$10 to your favorite cause or purchasing a \$10 food or grocery gift card and handing it to a homeless person you pass. You decide.

Yes, we need money in this world. But we aren't supposed to get attached to it. We should use the resources God gives us to both provide for our needs like food, shelter, and transportation, and to help God's kingdom. God is our ultimate provider, not us. This doesn't mean we have to throw all our cash out our car window, but it does mean we need to loosen our grip on it. This \$10 is symbolic of releasing our dependence or desire for money, being grateful for all the ways God provides, and following Christ's commands to care for those in need.

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." —Hebrews 13:5

Journal prompt:

Who did you give the money to? Why did you give it to them? Was it easy or hard to let go of the cash? How did the recipient react? How did you feel while actually giving the ten dollars and afterwards?

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The word "Day 4" is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center of the image.

Day 4

Unfollow ten accounts on social media

Why?

Because Jesus asks us over and over again, “Are you listening? Really listening?” And He means to Him, His truths, the things He tells us. If we want to hear Jesus better, we need to monitor who we’re giving our ears to.

We’ve basically invited the accounts we follow to tell us whatever they want on a daily basis. They have our headspace. If we’re following accounts that don’t encourage, inspire, teach, connect, or engage us, why again are we following them? Allowing them to speak to us?

Let’s clean up our feeds. You can delete any account that stirs up something negative in you or pulls you away from the wonderful, awe inspiring person Jesus created you to be. Maybe it’s someone who gives you that yucky jealous feeling deep inside. Delete. Maybe it’s an account that tempts you to fall back into a bad habit. Why expose yourself to that? Maybe it’s just someone you barely know or whose posts do nothing for you--they’re literally just cluttering your feed. Outta here. Let’s build our lives on Jesus and be wary of anything we’re “listening” to that pulls us away from Him.

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.” —Matthew 7:24-25

Journal prompt:

Who did you unfollow? Why? How do you feel knowing you’ll no longer be “hearing” from them? Did you find it hard to delete ten accounts, or did you end up unfollowing more?

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The text 'Day 5' is overlaid in a large, white, cursive font.

Day 5

Spend 10 minutes worshipping

Why?

The Bible is packed with reminders to worship our almighty, faithful, loving God. When we pause to focus on how awesome He is, Jesus will blow us away.

We all have problems, fears, deadlines and headaches. But we also have a God who invented and crafted billions of stars and itty bitty bugs with wings and feet and teeny tiny bug brains. Our God paints rainbows and created our cardiovascular system. Our God promises to never leave us. He surrounds us with angel armies and works everything together for our good and His glory.

Worshipping Him can be done lots of ways, but today we're going to listen to worship music. Worship music reminds us of how mighty, faithful, and loving Jesus is.

So take ten minutes and pop in your earbuds or turn on your home speakers. Maybe grab an instrument. And sing to the Lord. Actually singing the words out loud reinforces the lyrical truths in our brains.

I'm all for listening to worship music while I cook dinner or get ready in the morning. But today these ten minutes are not for multi-tasking—just for worshipping. If you need some suggestions, I have links to some of my favorites on the last page of the study.

Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. —Chronicles 16:8-10

Journal prompt:

What music did you listen to? Did you sing along? Did you have a favorite song or discover a new one? What was your mood before worshipping? Afterwards? Did you realize, hear, or learn anything while worshipping?



Day 6

Write down ten things you're thankful for

Why?

Jesus thanked God all the time. Before He did miracles, before meals, for God's provision. If Jesus, who is actually God, thanked God the Father, we should too.

When we give thanks it literally flips our problems upside down. If my power goes out, and I wake up late, because my alarm didn't go off and one of my kids has a fever, I can grumble and gripe. OR I can thank God for our home, for a cozy bed, for my sweet kiddo who is ill, for candles that light up the darkness and have a soothing lavender scent and suddenly I feel full and blessed. Instead of focusing on what I lack, I'm focusing on the abundance I have. It reminds me that no, not everything and everyone is against me. I have a God who is always for me. A God who provides. A God who is with me.

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. —Colossians 3:17

Journal prompt:

List your ten things:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Was it easy or difficult to come up with ten? Did you keep going? Describe how you felt before you started your gratitude list and after you completed it.

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The text 'Day 7' is overlaid in a large, white, elegant script font.

Day 7

Give ten things away

Why?

Jesus calls us to a simpler life. One where we're more focused on Him, and less focused on our stuff.

Our lives are cluttered. I'll spend three minutes rooting through my t-shirt shelf to try and find the one I want to wear today. I'll rummage through the pantry for another three minutes trying to find a jar of that sweet French strawberry jam I'm in love with. But if I gave away the tees I never wear it would be easier to find the ones I want. If I donated the food in my pantry that we'll never actually eat—I'm looking at you cracked pepper and cheese rice mix—it would be simpler to find my jam. The less things we have the less time we spend looking for what we want or need. With fewer things we also have less time spent organizing, maintaining and putting these things away. Less clutter also means less stuff getting in the way of whatever Jesus is calling us to.

Think of it like this: if you spend five or ten minutes looking around your closet for the right shoes to go with your outfit or rummaging around your desk for the black Sharpie to address that package, that's 5-10 minutes you could have spent praying or worshipping or calling that friend—things you may be struggling to find time for. So choose a cluttered place of your home and grab a box or bag and fill it with at least ten things to pass along to a friend who could use them, a local shelter, food bank, or ministry.

He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. — Luke 9:3

Journal prompt:

What did you give away? Who did you give it to? Did you find it difficult to find ten things you could part with? Or did you keep going? How do you feel knowing that 1. Those things are no longer cluttering your life and 2. Those things are potentially helping someone else?

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The text "Day 8" is overlaid in a large, white, elegant script font.

Day 8

Read 10 Psalms

Why?

Because reading the Bible is reading the living word of God! One of the goals of this study was to hear God more clearly. Reading His word is a pretty phenomenal way to do that.

The psalms were written by real people feeling all the emotions—just like you and me. When we read them we're reminded that God wants to hear all of our stuff—our joy, fear, excitement, pain, triumph and grief. The psalmists do not hold back. And neither should we when we pray. The writers of these psalms (which were originally songs of prayer) poured out their hearts to God. They also praised Him and thanked Him for His goodness. The psalms are a fabulous model for prayer.

So, grab your Bible (or Bible App) and open up to the middle of that big, beautiful book. You should find yourself in the psalms. If you have ten favorites read those. If you'd rather start in the middle or from the beginning and read 1-10, great. Read whichever ten you like. Preferably out loud. Because it's easier to stay focused that way. If you want suggestions here are some of my favorites; Psalm 1, 23, 40, 96, 121 and 139.

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" —Matthew 4:4

Journal prompt:

Which psalms did you read? Did you have a favorite? Did God touch your heart while you were reading? What did you discover? Did any of the psalms feel like a prayer for a situation you're currently facing?

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The word "Day" is written in a large, white, cursive font across the center of the image.

Day 9

Spend 10 minutes outside

Why?

God created this gorgeous earth and then created us humans to live in and cultivate it. When we're near the stunning things God created we get a glimpse of how mighty, creative, and amazing our God is.

You may have experienced it before—a wave of peace crashing over you or the slowing of your racing heart when you hear the roar of the ocean or gaze up at the tall peaks of a mountain. The inner calm that fills you when you listen to the joyful bubbling of a creek or marvel at an exquisitely designed six-sided crystal snowflake. Getting closer to creation brings us closer to the God who created it and us.

Jesus went outside all the time. He walked through grainfields, spent time on mountains, went on fishing trips, taught from boats and hung out in gardens. If we want to get closer to Him, we should follow suit. So let's go outside today.

You can go on a walk or sit on a park bench or your own porch. You can bundle up or sit by a cozy firepit. You choose where you go. But do not take anything that will distract you from creation. No book. No dog on a leash. No AirPods. You can take your phone for safety reasons (and in case you want to snap a gorgeous pic at the end of your ten minutes), but don't touch that screen during your ten-minute outdoor experience. Just you and fresh air and Jesus. Breathe in His love and grace.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. —Genesis 1:1

Journal prompt:

Where did you go? What did you see? How did the air smell? How did the elements feel on your face? How did you do with the quiet? Where did your mind wander?

A photograph of a pond filled with green lily pads and numerous small pink flowers. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The text 'Day 10' is overlaid in a large, white, elegant script font.

Day 10

Turn off your phone for 10 hours

Why?

Because we turn to our phones out of instinct. Remember my example from the intro about waving goodbye to my family? In those pauses where we're standing in line, waiting for our friend, have five minutes to kill—what if instead of picking up our phones, we turned to God? We could pray, worship, have a great conversation, rest—all things that bring us closer to God. When we put that dang phone down, we're turning down the noise and making it easier to hear Jesus. Which is what we've been working on the past nine days.

Yes. Your phone. Yes. For ten entire hours. I'm going to do it, too. I actually turn my phone off every week on my Sabbath (day of rest) to more fully unplug from the world and get closer to God. I'll be honest, at first it was a trick and a half, but now I look forward to not having to answer any texts or messages, not needing to know what anyone is doing on social media. It's incredibly freeing.

If you can't do this because of people you're responsible for or for safety reasons, find a way to put it down and only touch it if necessary. If some of these hours need to be while you're asleep—that's fine, too. Set an old fashioned alarm clock. Do what you have to do, but fast in some manner for ten hours from your phone. Each time you're tempted to pick it up, instead try one of the things we've been doing throughout this study—whisper a prayer, read a psalm, step outside, put something in a donate pile, sit on the piano bench and play a song that brings you closer to Jesus.

Jesus said, "Come off by yourselves; let's take a break and get a little rest." For there was constant coming and going. They didn't even have time to eat. —Mark 6:31

Journal prompt:

How many times did you reach for your phone? If you had to do this again (I highly recommend you do) is there a different ten hours you would set aside or a different way you would handle this exercise? What emotions did you have? In what ways were you frustrated? In what ways did you feel free?



Conclusion

Congratulations!

You did it! I'm so proud of you and so grateful for the ten minutes we spent each day focusing more on Jesus and less on the distractions of life.

Feel free to start over on day one and spend ten minutes praying tomorrow. Or try integrating some of these practices into your daily or weekly routine. None of it is meant to give you more to-dos, but actually to give you more freedom.

I pray you found some peace and joy and rest. I pray you exhaled over the past ten days and felt closer to God.

If you enjoyed this study, I have another FREE study coming up, True Reflections: a 30-day devotional discovering who you were created to be starts April 5, 2021. Click [here](#) to sign up and either get your FREE digital copy or purchase a workbook. I'd also love for you to connect with me on the regular. You can find me [here](#):

www.laurasmithauthor.com

Instagram: [@laurasmithauthor](https://www.instagram.com/laurasmithauthor)

Facebook: [LauraLSmithAuthor](https://www.facebook.com/LauraLSmithAuthor)

Some of my favorite worship music:

Hymns: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1EJgjlxfvRtJunAWIXcc7>

Alternative worship: <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1P3WUdtQfMD4qT7hgEDLEa>

Worship <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/5oKZrrCcAnF86yXriw4YXv>



Journaling Page

10 MINUTES FOR 10 DAYS



LAURA L. SMITH



Journaling Page

10 MINUTES FOR 10 DAYS



LAURA L. SMITH



10 Minutes for 10 Days: reducing stress and finding more of Christ's peace

Copyright 2021 by Laura L. Smith

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For information, contact Laura L. Smith at www.laurasmithauthor.com

Photo of Monet's garden by Laura L. Smith, June 2019

Scripture quotations unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, NIV. Copyright 1973,1978,1984,2011 by Biblica Inc. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide.