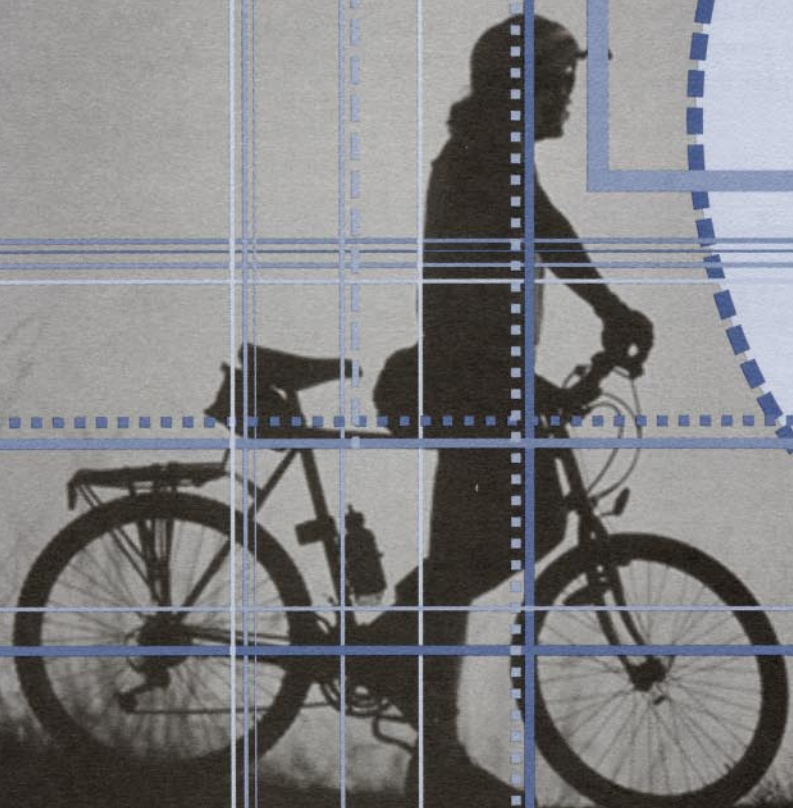


PEACE

24/7

Empowering Youth to Be Ministers of Peace and Justice

Time for the Soul



Community of Christ

VOLUME 1—2002-3A
FOREFRONT MINISTRIES



Become Aware

The teen years are a time of major transitions and decisions. You are expected to learn and study, discover your gifts, explore the world of personal relationships, make decisions about college and the future, learn to drive, and figure out just who you think you want to be in life.

It is the time to push the edge between responsibility and freedom. You are involved in school activities, but you need to get a job. You want material things, but you would really like it if someone else would buy them for you. You know drugs are not good for you, but you desper-

ately want to fit into the crowd. You want to be treated like an adult, but you still want the freedom to play like a kid. You want your parents to listen to you, but you don't necessarily want to listen to them.

You are a teen and for some reason it is suddenly important to understand how the whole universe thing fits together. You are filled with a multitude of questions. "Where is God and Jesus in the equation, and how do I fit in to it all? And what about the other religions out there?" The beliefs of your parents are no longer enough. You need to decide what *you* believe and why. You need answers to your questions, to discover your own convictions, and to have your own confirming experiences of faith.

Your body is physically changing every day. Face it; the person you saw in the mirror yesterday may look

completely different in just a matter of months. What's more, you not only look different you feel different! Hormones are raging as your body grows and matures—and that brings with it a maze of emotions. Love and hate seem very close together. Your pride is intense, and therefore easily hurt and humiliated. Happiness can turn to anger in a matter of moments. Fear and doubt can turn to depression.

To share peace with the world, you must first be at peace with yourself—and there lies the dilemma. The milestones of this age are wonderful and exciting, frustrating and confusing, and just plain exhausting! Since there is no way to skip this time in your life, the answer must be to embrace it. But as you embrace these years, you must also provide time for the soul.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Jesus understood the importance of taking time out of a busy, demanding schedule to rest, recover, and renew. This means different things to everyone. What do you like to do when you feel the need to take a break from everything and everybody?
- Personal "alone time" gives opportunity for you to wrestle with the confusions of life. It also provides time to feel the stillness of God. Where is your favorite place to go and be alone?
- When was the last time you turned off the television and even the music, got away from other people, and really let yourself rest? How did you feel before and after the experience?
- Whose responsibility is it to make sure that you take your time for the soul? yours? parents? teachers? friends? God? Why?

Acknowledge Responsibility

Psalm 23:1–3 adapted

Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need. I am sent to rest in the green pastures beside the still waters. In this rest, my soul is renewed and opened to the guidance of the Spirit.

Matthew 11:28–29 NRSV

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Mark 6:30–32 NRSV

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

Luke 5:15 The Message

As often as possible Jesus withdrew to out-of-the-way places for prayer.

due dates
tests
confusion
pressures
expectations
free time
sunset
music
nature
sports
reading
family
work
school
church
parents
friends
sunshine
rain
fear
quiet

Soul-time, Closed Doors, and Open Doors

Soul-time is that time and space where your soul and God meet. It offers opportunity for inner peace, creativity, searching, rest, renewal, and transforming realizations. *Closed Doors* are those things that keep you from your "soul-time." They may be anything from the highly personal or parental expectations to little brothers playing really loud music. *Open Doors* are those things that open you to the possibilities that "soul-time" can bring. They may be anything from a special place you like to go to the laughter and smile of friend. It is important to remember that these are different for every person. What is an *open door* for one person may be a major *closed door* for another.

Make a list of your current *closed doors* and *open doors*. If you are comfortable doing so, discuss some of them with a partner. What causes them to be *closed* or *open doors* for you? Are there ways you might be able to turn some of your *closed doors* into *open ones*?

Sing or read the song, "Teach Me, God, to Wonder" from *Hymns of the Saints*, number 176.

Stop and Just Be

Find a comfortable way to sit. If available, turn on background music. Soft instrumentals or sounds from nature work well. You may also do this in silence. Sit in a chair, on a pillow, or on the floor, but don't lie down. Place your hands in your lap with palms upward as if you are holding or receiving something.

For the next few minutes you will think or speak a phrase, the same phrase, over and over—almost as if you are slowly breathing it. This is called a mantra. Many phrases or words can be used, but for purposes of this experience use the words "my peace, God's peace."

Once in position, close your eyes and begin. Breathe deep and slow. Breathe in, "my peace." Breathe out, "God's peace." Breathe in, "my peace." Breathe out, "God's peace." Don't worry about what you are suppose to feel or think. **Just be!** If your mind starts to wonder, refocus on your mantra: Breathe in, "God's peace." Breathe out, "my peace."

Continue your meditation for fifteen minutes. (*Setting a timer before you start will free your mind from the time.*) You will be amazed at how quickly the time passes and how refreshed and renewed you feel at the end of this experience.

Acquire More Understanding

Scars Can Go Deep

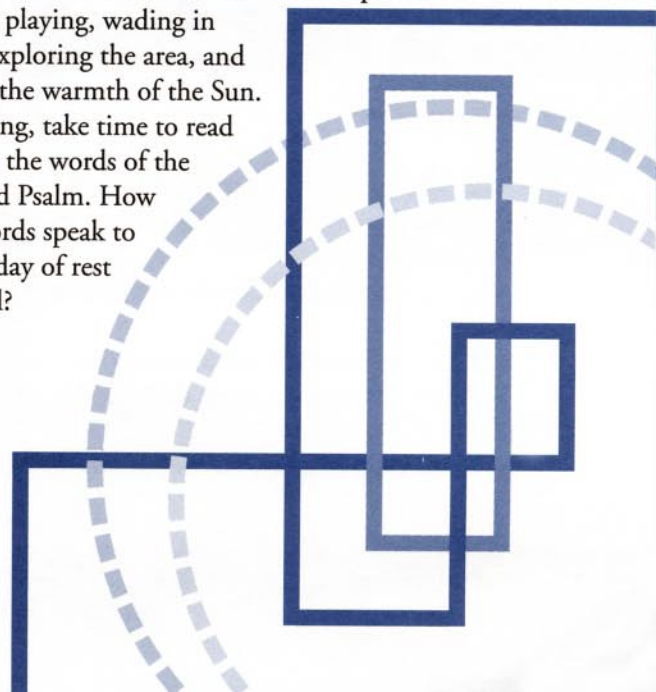
This activity works best in groups of two or three. Many types of things can keep us from total rest, renewal, and soul-time. Share a physical scar on your body and tell your partner the story behind it. Has it caused any open or closed doors for you?

Next, share an emotional scar with your partner. (*For example, someone called me fat when I was in third grade, and I have seen myself as fat ever since.*) As much as comfort will allow, discuss whether the emotional scar has become an open or closed door.

Finally offer a prayer for your partner and the healing of his or her scars.

A Shepherd's Advice

Plan a day where you can spend time in a beautiful setting of nature. One with green fields and a source of soothing waters would be perfect. If that is not available in your area, choose an area that reflects the awesomeness of God's creation. Have a picnic. Spend time playing, wading in the water, exploring the area, and soaking up the warmth of the Sun. Before leaving, take time to read and process the words of the twenty-third Psalm. How do these words speak to you after a day of rest and renewal?





Take Action

- Make a list of your schedule for the next week. What are your plans? Between school, work, family, friends, and church obligations have you allowed any time for the soul? Schedule time now! Even five minutes a day can help in your search for personal peace.

- Sometimes rest cannot happen because the emotional heart and our rational mind are in conflict with each other. This is often over a very specific issue. Don't fight it; let your head and heart talk it out. Write down what your head wants to say to your heart and what your heart wants to say to your head. Then learn from both!

- Practice the "Stop and Just Be" meditation exercise daily for a week. The more you do it, the easier it will be to let go and let yourself just be at peace in the presence of God.

- Become more aware of what brings rest to your body and soul. Is it riding a bike? jogging? playing the piano? drawing? reading? taking a shower? hiking? meditating? As you discover the activities that provide renewal for you, try to provide more opportunities for them in your daily schedule.

- To help keep your soul-time in tune, revisit your list of *open* and *closed doors* often.

- Record the questions and thoughts you are currently struggling with in a journal. If you remember to let your heart speak to your head, journaling can become an *open door* for you.

Become an Advocate

- Plan times for your family to get together and just play.
- Encourage worship planners in your congregation to provide opportunity for silent meditation as part of their services.
- Remind family and friends to stop and take time for the soul.
- If your parents don't understand your need for relaxation, renewal, and time for the soul, work through this resource with them.
- Teach "Stop and Just Be" to a group of children.