

Spiritual Preparation – April 5 – 7, 2019 – Estes Park, CO

## THE DESERT OF LONELINESS TO A GARDEN OF SOLITUDE Part #1 - CALL

I am going to ask you 3 questions. If you wish, have a place to write down your answers.

What is a longing of your heart, today, right now? Write it down.

What have you done with that longing? Shared it, ignored it, denied it? Make a note of that.

Here's a totally different question: What do you think of when you think of beauty? Just the word, beauty. Write it down.

Over the past few years, I have met many people who have the same longing as me, a longing for companionship: real, authentic companionship, where we are liked, sought out, and known. When this longing isn't met, we can feel a loneliness that is deep and painful. It can sit inside of us like a desert drying up with no sight of water or nourishment, actually choking the life out of us as we try to continue on with our work, family life, social life, and overall day to day life.

If you've felt that longing, when was that for you? What did that look like? What did it feel like for you? What did you do with it?

Recently I have been in one of the driest deserts of loneliness I have experienced, craving human connection and attention. I literally will be waiting for a text back from a friend or a return call from someone with confirmation of meeting up, and the text doesn't come nor does the call. I sit in anguish feeling hurt, insecure, and wondering 'what have I done wrong?' and 'why aren't they texting back?' This hits that painful depth of my soul longing to be known and chosen as the one who is your friend.

I feel I am pretty connected to Jesus and spend time with Him daily. I am in consistent communication with Him about my needs, praying for others, and offering true gratefulness for all He is providing for me. During this recent time, my loneliness and longing for connection is still stronger and deeper and practically negates any time I am spending with Jesus.

At the beginning of the year, I received an email from one of my spiritual mentors, Steve Smith. At the end of the email there was a poem by John O'Donohue called 'For Longing'. I printed it with all intentions to pull it out sometime the next week to read it.

Then I noticed at the top of the page it read 'Consider the blessing by this Irish Priest'. "Blessing? It is called 'For Longing'! How is THAT going to be a blessing?" I thought. I paused right then to read it, and I read it again, and again, actually 3 more times.

The final lines of this poem read 'May you come to accept your longing as divine urgency. May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.'

Wow. What? He was longing for ME? Is it the same as my longing for companionship? As I sat with it, repeating those final words over and over, God showed me that He is waiting for me to come to HIM with my loneliness, and all of my longings actually. He has time and space for me. HE is choosing me. I was missing it because I was stuck on waiting for the text reply or call back from that

friend. During my daily time with Jesus, I actually wasn't spending time with Him to listen and pay attention, I wasn't in solitude to see what He had to say about my longings. Now, after reading 'For Longing' that poem, I believe He was allowing this desert of loneliness to get my attention to see He was wanting my time. He was calling, in a *divine urgency*, to be The ONE who filled my longings and water my desert.

As I have now started to spend time in solitude with Jesus and listening to Him, He has begun to change my desert into a garden, full of beauty. He showed me the *beauty* of my longings. He showed me the *beauty* of my desires. He showed me that He could change my desert of loneliness that is dry and in pain to a garden of solitude that He will grow and nourish with Truth, and where I will be known for who I truly am, as His beloved daughter and friend, Janine.

Exodus 14:14 says 'the Lord will fight for me, I only need to be still'- that is what Jesus is doing all the time, no matter what I am doing. He is fighting for me, on my behalf, for all I need AND I can be still.

Are you in a desert of loneliness? What do you need to let Jesus fight for you about, and you can be still? Do you know Jesus is longing for time with you with a *divine urgency*? I wonder what beauty in your longings He wants to show you through a time of solitude with Him. I'll repeat that, I wonder what beauty in your longings He wants to show you through a time of solitude with Him.

We are going to take a minute to be in solitude with Jesus. No Bibles or music needed, just you and Jesus. Remember that longing you wrote down, give Him that longing and then be still and listen to Him answer you.

1-2 minutes.

Did Jesus water you a bit? Do you see a piece of beauty in your longings from this time of solitude?

As you prepare to serve on the April weekend, this is an invitation to find times of solitude to be still with Jesus and be connected to the beauty that is within you before you come to Estes Park. He wants to take any loneliness or longings you have and make them into a growing and beautiful garden that only He can water.

Our song for this weekend is called "Take me to the King" by Tamela Mann. It spoke directly to me about the *divine urgency* of needing to go directly to Jesus, my King with the all or nothing that I have. After we get off of the phone call, I want to encourage you to find this song on YouTube and listen, with the same sense of listening that you just practiced. What beauty is He showing you through these lyrics or musical notes? What is He longing for from you? (you will receive the link on Tuesday with an email of this spiritual prep).

May our spiritual preparation for the weekend help us prepare to PAY ATTENTION to what He is saying to us, longing from us, and loving us through so we can serve the new missionaries, and each other, with His love and beauty. I look forward to connecting with you again at the Friday staff meeting where we will read the poem 'For Longing' and share some of the beauty within each of us.

## THE DESERT OF LONELINESS TO A GARDEN OF SOLITUDE Part #1 - IN-PERSON

I am going to ask you 3 questions. If you wish, write down your answers.

What is a longing of your heart? Write it down.

What have you done with that longing? Shared it, ignored it, denied it? Make a note of that.

Here's a totally different question: What do you think of when you think of beauty? Just the word, beauty. Write down that thought.

Over the past few years, I have met many people who have the same longing as me, a longing for companionship: real, authentic companionship, where we are liked, sought out, and known. When this longing isn't met, we can feel a loneliness that is deep and painful. It can sit inside of us like a desert drying up with no sight of water or nourishment, actually choking the life out of us as we try to continue on with our work, family life, social life, and overall day to day life.

If you've felt that same longing, when was that for you? What did that look like? What did it feel like for you? What did you do with it?

The past year I have been in one of the driest deserts of loneliness I have experienced, craving human connection and attention. I literally will be waiting for a text back from a friend or a return call from someone with confirmation of meeting up, and the text doesn't come nor does the call. I sit in anguish feeling hurt, insecure, and wondering 'what have I done wrong?' and 'why aren't they texting back?' This hits that painful depth of my soul longing to be known and chosen as the one who is your friend.

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The final lines of this poem read 'May you come to accept your longing as divine urgency. May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.'

Wow. What? He was longing for ME? Was it the same kind of longing for companionship that I was craving? As I sat with it, repeating those final words over and over, God showed me that He is waiting for me to come to HIM with my loneliness, and all of my longings actually. He has time and space for me. HE is choosing me. I was missing it because I was stuck on waiting for the text reply or call back from that friend. During my daily time with Jesus, I actually wasn't spending time with Him to listen and pay attention, I wasn't in solitude to see what He had to say about my longings.

Now, after reading 'For Longing', I believe He was allowing this desert of loneliness I was living in to get my attention to see He was wanting my time. He was calling, in a *divine urgency*, to be The ONE who filled my longings and water my desert.

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Our song for this weekend is called "Take me to the King" by Tamela Mann. It spoke directly to me about the *divine urgency* of needing to go directly to Jesus, my King, with the all or nothing that I have. What beauty is He showing you through these lyrics or musical notes? What is He longing for from you? Let's listen.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G4YU5aGQV6j0>

We are now going to take 10 minutes to be in solitude with Jesus. No Bibles or music needed, just you and Jesus. Remember that longing you wrote down, give Him that longing to fight for and then be still and listen to Him answer you.

10 minutes.

Did Jesus water you a bit? Do you see a piece of beauty in your longings from this time of solitude?

As you prepare to serve on the April weekend, this is an invitation to find times of solitude to be still with Jesus and be connected to the beauty that is within you. He wants to take any loneliness or longings you have and make them into a growing and beautiful garden that only He can water.

On your take-away page, there are three points of connection for you and your prayer partner. Take a look at them and reach out with your partner before we come together in April.

May our spiritual preparation for the weekend help us prepare to PAY ATTENTION to what He is saying to us, longing from us, and loving us through so we can serve the new missionaries, and each other, with His love and beauty. I look forward to connecting with you again at the Friday staff meeting where we will read the poem 'For Longing' and share some of the beauty within us.

## Spiritual Preparation #2

In preparation for the upcoming weekend, take time each day for a few minutes of solitude with Jesus. Whether it is 5 minutes or 20 minutes, sit in His presence and listen to Him calling to you and longing for you. He wants to water your desert today and help it bloom into a garden of the beauty He has for you.

Remember Exodus 14:14 – “The Lord will fight for me, I only need to be still.” Jesus is fighting for you right now as you prepare to staff the weekend. What do you need to give Him? How do you need to be still so He can work?

As you sit with Jesus, here are 2 questions you can ask Him:

- 1 – What can I let You fight for, for me, as I head up the mountain to staff?
- 2 – What beauty do You want me to see in the midst of my longings?

May you feel His peace and know His divine urgency for time *with you*, today.  
Looking forward to Friday and serving in the garden of all the beauty you will bring!

Peace and love to you,  
Janine

You are being given this poem ‘For Longing’ by John O’Donohue

We are going to take 10 minutes to be in solitude with God. Read through these lines and hear Him calling TO YOU.

Think of these 2 questions:

What longing is specific to me today?

Ask Jesus, ‘What beauty do You want me to see in this longing?’

TEN MINUTES.

Exodus 14:14 says ‘The Lord will fight for me, I only need to be still.’

As I was striving to figure out my own way to get attention, plowing through my feelings of hurt and insecurities, Jesus was actually doing all the fighting for me. He was using my friends, my schedule, AND my longings to get me to the place of being still, with Him, and Him alone so HE could do the fighting, including taking my hurt and insecurities to show me the Truth. My desert of loneliness started to change as He showed me, in my solitude, all the beauty that was in my life.

### From a desert of loneliness to a garden of solitude - #3

Sisters, spread out around the room and get comfortable.

I love learning from scripture how to live my life. Jesus showed us, by His example, what we can do during all situations. Luke tells us that Jesus went out into solitude. And Often!

LUKE

4:42 At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place.

5:15 yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

9:10 when the apostles returned, they told Jesus everything they had done. Then he slipped quietly away with them.

Truth, pure truth.

In the pre-weekend staff meetings, I mentioned a poem called "For Longing" by John O'Donohue. The poem lists several types of longings that we are probably encountering at any given time. It ends with 'may you come to accept your longing as divine urgency. May you know the urgency with which God longs for you'.

How does that make you feel?

What do you think of first when you hear that Jesus is longing for you?

I am going to read the poem to you and then will give you a copy. After I am done reading, we are going into a time of solitude. You don't need your Bible or your journal, only this poem. Sit with it, read it over a couple of times, calm your body, take a few God-breaths and listen to what Jesus is telling you.

What do you hear?

What is He saying?

After some time, I will play the song "Take me to the King". When you hear the song, and are ready, you can come pick a piece of beauty from this box. This piece of beauty can be your reminder this weekend of the garden of beauty that Jesus has for you, that He longs to show you and share with you.

(at the end of the song)

In closing, I want to leave you with our scripture for the weekend: Exodus 14:14. It is from the part of the old testament where the Israelites were fleeing from the Egyptians and they were afraid. They wanted to turn back and continue serving the old way instead of moving to the promised land. They were telling Moses they will die in the wilderness, or to

make this personal – the desert of loneliness. And Moses assured them, “The Lord will fight for you. You only need to be still.” The desert of loneliness or the garden of solitude? We get to choose. Jesus is calling us to Him – to trust, and be still. “The Lord will fight for me, I only need to be still.”

Let's pray.