SELAH

Steady Hands, Gentle Heart

Five mornings, October 12 to 16

MONDAY HELD STEADY.

TUESDAY ENTRUSTED.

WEDNESDAY HANDLED GENTLY.

THURSDAY VINDICATED.

FRIDAY USEFUL AGAIN.

Each morning has a place to write. A notebook works. So does the notes app on your phone. Ten minutes is enough.

NW Hills
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

MONDAY

SELAH

HELD STEADY.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

Sunday we talked about a kind of strength that keeps showing up and refuses to get even. This is the first of five mornings with that idea, and the week has already started asking things of you. Stop anyway. Nothing on your list will disappear in the next ten minutes. Right now the only thing being asked of you is to sit still and give God the first part of your day.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Tired arms were the whole problem in today's story. Before you read about them, notice your own body. Let your shoulders drop. Unclench your hands. You don't have to hold anything up for the next two minutes.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

As you inhale, pray, “You hold me up, Lord...”

As you exhale, pray, “...when my arms grow tired.”

LOOK

On Sunday you heard that the Hebrew word Habakkuk used for faithfulness shows up first in this story. And there's an interesting detail in how the Greek Old Testament translated this verse. When it did, it didn't say Moses' hands held steady. It said his hands were held steady, and it used the same verb for what Aaron and Hur were doing.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset.*
>
> Exodus 17:10–12 NIV

ASK

Moses was the leader, the one on the hill with the staff of God, and his arms still gave out. The steadiness in this story didn't come from his grip. Aaron and Hur held his hands, and God carried the day.

This isn't a lesson that everything depends on you holding on. If your arms feel heavy right now, that isn't failure; Moses' did too. And if no one is holding them up at the moment, start by telling God exactly that. Sunday's line still stands: Moses' arms got tired. God's don't.

- Where are your arms tired right now? Name it plainly.
- Who have been your Aaron and Hur, the people who held you steady when you couldn't? If no names come to mind, what would it take to let someone in?

- Sunday you heard that the same word shows up in “great is your faithfulness.” When has God held you steady before?
- Whose arms could you help hold up this week? What would that look like on an ordinary day?

Write a short prayer thanking God for someone who has held up your arms, and asking him to steady you today.

Or, if it feels like no one is holding you up right now, write a prayer asking God to hold you himself and to send you an Aaron or a Hur.

HEAR

Listening is hard on a Monday. Your mind is already running ahead to everything you have to do, and that's normal. Don't fight it. Just keep bringing it back. Sit quietly for a couple of minutes and ask, “Lord, who do you want me to notice today?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

TUESDAY

SELAH

ENTRUSTED.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

A lot can happen in a day. Maybe yesterday went better than you expected, or maybe it went sideways by noon. Either way, you came back, and coming back is the whole point of these mornings. Take a minute to stop before today gets moving.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Most of us carry more than we realize: a job, a family, a schedule, other people's expectations. Before you pick any of it back up, breathe. Let your hands rest open in your lap, as if you're setting things down for a moment.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

As you inhale, pray, “Lord, you put this in my hands...”

As you exhale, pray, “...make me faithful with little things.”

LOOK

Paul wrote these words to a church that liked to rank its leaders and compare them. He answered by changing the question. It isn't who's impressive. It's who's faithful with what God gave them.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.*
>
> 1 Corinthians 4:1–2 NIV

ASK

God has entrusted you with something. The requirement isn't to be impressive. It's to be faithful.

The Hebrew word you heard about on Sunday shows up in an unexpected place. In 1 Chronicles 9 it describes the gatekeepers who were assigned to “positions of trust,” and a man named Mattithiah who “was entrusted with the responsibility for baking the offering bread.” Gatekeepers and a bread baker. That's the company faithfulness keeps.

This isn't a grade. Right after this, Paul writes, “I do not even judge myself... It is the Lord who judges me.” Faithfulness is fruit the Spirit grows in you, not a score you keep on yourself. And Paul ends that paragraph with God handing out praise.

- What has God put in your hands right now? Think small and specific: a person, a job, a promise, a key you're trusted with.
- Where is it hardest for you to be faithful when nobody's watching?
- Sunday's list included the people who make the coffee and clean up after everyone else. Whose quiet faithfulness could you thank this week?

- What is one small thing you could be faithful with today?

Write a one-sentence prayer asking God to make you faithful with one specific thing he has entrusted to you.

Or, if you feel you've been careless with what you were given, write a prayer receiving his grace and asking for a fresh start today.

HEAR

Silence can feel unproductive on a Tuesday, when real work is waiting. But listening is part of faithfulness too. Sit for a few minutes and ask, “Lord, what have you put in front of me today that I might overlook?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

WEDNESDAY

SELAH

HANDLED GENTLY.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

You're halfway through the week. By now something has probably bumped a sore spot: a hard conversation, a careless word, an old ache. You don't have to fix it before you sit down. Bring it with you. This is a safe place to set it down for a few minutes.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Think about how you'd hold something fragile: slowly, carefully, without squeezing. Breathe that way this morning. Let each breath out be a little slower than the one before.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

> *As you inhale, pray, "Gentle Jesus, you won't break me..."*
>
> *As you exhale, pray, "...even where I'm bruised today."*

LOOK

Matthew wrote this one chapter after the words that closed Sunday's sermon: “I am gentle and humble in heart.” Here he reaches back to Isaiah to show what that gentleness looks like. As you read, notice what this servant refuses to do.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *“Here is my servant whom I have chosen,*
> *the one I love, in whom I delight;*
> *I will put my Spirit on him,*
> *and he will proclaim justice to the nations.*
> *He will not quarrel or cry out;*
> *no one will hear his voice in the streets.*
> *A bruised reed he will not break,*
> *and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,*
> *till he has brought justice through to victory.*
> *In his name the nations will put their hope.”*
>
> Matthew 12:18–21 NIV

ASK

Jesus doesn't snap the bruised reed or pinch out the wick that's barely burning. He handles what's damaged in you gently. And look at the last line: “till he has brought justice through to victory.” He wins, and he doesn't break people on the way. That's strength riding a donkey.

“He will not quarrel or cry out” is about how Jesus treats the bruised. It doesn't mean gentle people never speak up. Jesus spoke plainly and confronted injustice. If someone is hurting you, speaking up is not a failure of gentleness.

- What feels bruised, or barely burning, in your life right now?
- Have you expected God to be harsh with you there? Where did that expectation come from?
- How does it change things to picture Jesus handling that part of you carefully?

- Who around you is a bruised reed this week? How could you be gentle with them?

Write a short prayer bringing Jesus the bruised place you named, and asking him to handle it gently.

Or, if it's hard to believe Jesus would be gentle with you, write a prayer asking him to show you his heart.

HEAR

Halfway through the week is a good time to notice what God has been doing since Monday. Monday you read about tired arms held steady. Today you read about a bruised reed left unbroken. Sit quietly and ask, “Lord, where have you been gentle with me this week?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

THURSDAY

SELAH

VINDICATED.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

You may be getting the hang of this by now. That's good, but it can also turn into a routine you rush through without really stopping. So be intentional today. Slow down before you start, and give these next minutes your full attention.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Sunday started with the comeback line you think of in the shower, the one you're saving for the right moment. Notice whether you're carrying one this morning. Breathe slowly, and with each breath out, picture setting it down.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

As you inhale, pray, “You will make it right, Lord...”

As you exhale, pray, “...I don't have to get even.”

LOOK

This psalm is attributed to David, and it reads like advice from someone who has watched a lot of unfair things happen. Jesus drew one of its lines into the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” The word for meek there is the same word Matthew uses for the gentle king on the donkey.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *Commit your way to the LORD;*
> *trust in him and he will do this:*
> *He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,*
> *your vindication like the noonday sun.*
> *Be still before the LORD*
> *and wait patiently for him;*
> *do not fret when people succeed in their ways,*
> *when they carry out their wicked schemes.*
> *Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;*
> *do not fret—it leads only to evil.*
>
> Psalm 37:5–8 NIV

ASK

You don't have to get even. God sees what was done, and he will bring your vindication out into the open like the noonday sun. That frees you to put down the anger instead of carrying a score you were never meant to settle.

Two things this psalm does not mean. Waiting on God for justice never means staying where someone is hurting you. Getting safe is not getting even, and telling someone what is happening to you is neither revenge nor gossip. And the “reward” here is vindication, being shown to be in the right. It is not a promise of money or success.

If you've been fretting, that isn't a failure either. The psalm invites you to hand the worry to God, not to pretend it isn't there.

- Is there a comeback line you're carrying for someone right now? What would it look like to leave it with God?
- Where do you most want to see things made right? Tell God plainly.
- “Do not fret when people succeed in their ways.” Whose success bothers you most? What would it mean to be still about it?
- Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth. How does that change what strength looks like to you?

Write a short prayer handing God one situation where you want to get even, and asking him to make it right in his way and his time.

Or, if you're not ready to let it go, write a prayer telling God honestly how you feel. He can handle that.

HEAR

Listening is hard when your mind keeps replaying what someone did. If that happens, don't scold yourself. Each time it comes back, hand it over again and return to the quiet. Then ask, “Lord, what do you want me to do with this?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.

FRIDAY

SELAH

USEFUL AGAIN.

(Write your answers down)

STOP

This is the last of five mornings. Look back at the week: held steady, entrusted, handled gently, vindicated. Every one of those was something God did for you. Today turns outward. Stop one more time before the weekend starts, and let God have this space.

- What's on your mind? Notice your thoughts. Is there a distraction that you need to set aside for a few minutes during this quiet time? Is there something specific you feel God is asking you to pay attention to?
- What's on your heart? What are you carrying into this space? A specific emotion, a person, a weight you didn't realize you were holding?
- Describe how you currently feel in just one word.

Write your answers down before you move on.

EXHALE

Breathing out is a kind of letting go. You can't take a fresh breath in until you release the old one. As you breathe this morning, let go of an old failure you keep replaying.

If you find it hard to focus, count slowly to four as you breathe in and slowly to six as you breathe out, letting the count steady your pace.

> *As you inhale, pray, "Father, you don't throw people away..."*
>
> *As you exhale, pray, "...use me to help restore them."*

LOOK

Years before Paul wrote this letter, a man named John Mark quit a missionary journey partway through. When it was time for the next trip, Barnabas wanted to give Mark another chance. Paul refused, and the two friends split over it. Barnabas took Mark anyway. Now Paul is near the end of his life, writing from prison. Listen to who he asks for.

Read it slowly, two times, before you move on.

> *Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.*
>
> 2 Timothy 4:9–11 NIV

ASK

The man Paul once refused to take along is the man he asks for at the end. Mark wasn't thrown away. Through Barnabas's gentleness, God made him useful again. And notice the other names. Demas deserted, but “only Luke is with me.” The doctor from Sunday's sermon stayed.

Restoring someone gently, like mending a net, never means skipping consequences, keeping harm quiet, or putting someone back where they hurt people. Mark's failure was quitting the work, not hurting anyone. And restoring someone is never about returning to a person who harmed you. Nobody gets to forgive on someone else's behalf.

- Have you ever felt written off, by someone else or by yourself? What does Mark's story say to you?
- Who has been a Barnabas to you, someone who gave you another chance?
- Is there someone you know who has fallen and needs a Barnabas? What is one gentle step you could take toward them?

- Where are you tempted to climb on the horse, in person or online, instead of helping fix the net?

Write a prayer asking God to show you one person you can help restore, and to make you gentle with them.

Or, if you're the one who feels written off, write a prayer asking God to make you useful again.

HEAR

You've stopped five mornings this week, and that's worth noticing. This practice doesn't have to end today. Before you finish, sit quietly one more time and ask, “Lord, how do you want me to carry this into next week?”

Whatever comes into your mind, write it down.