

Dear Taylor students,

You are facing a difficult time in your lives. You have heard from someone older than you that this is an unprecedented time in the history of the world, especially the United States, and we do not know what to expect. And, yet, knowing all of that doesn't take away the sadness, frustration, and uncertainty swirling through your minds and emotions. I have two children who are Taylor students and they are grieving the loss of two-thirds of the spring semester. One is a senior and so the news of continued online learning for the rest of the year was devastating. So many "lasts" to experience like Airband, Mosaic Night, Ritz on the Roof, graduation, but mostly friends and faculty.

Beyond questions about school, worry about susceptible family members and friends, effects on your family's finances, effects on the current and future economy, and what everything will look like when this is over swim in your head. Here's my small message to you: It's okay to question circumstances and experience those emotions. Sadness, grief, frustration, fear, disbelief, uncertainty, and anger are all normal reactions to the situation. You aren't alone. We are all feeling multiple emotions.

King David lamented to God frequently about his life and the nation of Israel. David in Psalm 10:1 says, "O Lord, why do you stand so far away? Why do you hide when I am in sorrow?" (NLT). Do you feel like King David? It's okay, God wants to hear you. Express your feelings about what is happening and then listen. Listening requires something of us, though. It requires quietness. Not just the absence of ambient sound around you, but mental quietness. God revealed Himself to Elijah in a whisper, not the storm, earthquake or fire. The difficulty in our time is that listening is hard with all of the noise happening around us, and, maybe, COVID-19 provides time to listen.

Listening requires practice. Listening requires intentionally being and searching for stillness. In northern lower Michigan is a place, Hoefft State Park in Rogers City, where I camped almost every summer for the past 40 years. One of my favorite things to do there is sitting on the sand dunes near the beach listening to the water lap gently on the shore. It is peaceful and restful, but it requires sitting still and focusing only on the sound. The sound of the waves lapping is so quiet you don't hear it when you move, talk, or listen to anything else. I just sit and observe nature. May I suggest practicing silence with God is like sitting on the dunes listening to the gentle waves? It will be hard. Some of you have homes that are not quiet, you can't get away, and it seems impossible. Try. Be creative. You will benefit from the effort.

George MacDonald, an author from the 19th century, writes in his stories about people often becoming ill and bedridden for weeks. The characters don't have modern medicine to heal them quickly and send them off to the next appointment. The characters have to stop and lie still. In the stillness, they know God better. Try to create the stillness. Quarantine your technology for a portion of your day. Not only will the new habit help you through the current crises, but it will also continue with you into the rest of your life.

In the stillness listen for how you can be Jesus to someone in this crisis. Maybe it's a family member, a neighbor, someone at the store (only when going is necessary), someone you talk with online, or other situations. Often, what seems like a horrible moment, can turn into a valuable moment for service. When Stephen was stoned to death and the church persecuted by Paul, the new believers were most likely confused and scared. Many escaped the persecution by going to other countries and the persecution moved the believers out of their comfort zone and promoted church growth around the world.

Maybe you need to be Jesus to someone at this time. Be aware of those moments in your days. “May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you his favor and give you his peace” (Numbers 6:24-26, NLT).

In Christ,

Carey

MAHE Student/Parent of Taylor Students (Senior and Sophomore)