

THE BIRTH OF THE LANTERN

A Quiet Invitation for Weary Souls

"read the words and rest"

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Clarity Mission.

It may be shared, gifted, and quoted in
accordance with the Mission.

*For every weary soul
who sits beside the bedside lamp
and wonders if anyone notices.*

Someone does.
The lamp remains lit.

*"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path."*

— Psalm 119:105

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Chapter One

When the World Became Loud

There are seasons when life becomes very heavy for quiet people.

Responsibilities continue. Conversations continue. The world keeps moving quickly. Yet beneath the ordinary rhythm of days, many people quietly carry exhaustion no one else fully sees.

Some continue smiling while inwardly weary.

Some carry grief through long evenings.

Some sit awake beside hospital beds, beside aging parents, beside silent rooms, wondering whether peace will ever fully return again.

The modern world has grown louder than human beings were designed to endure. Screens glow late into the night. Headlines arrive faster than the heart can absorb them. Voices crowd the air from morning until the body finally falls asleep. And somewhere underneath all of that noise, a soul begins

longing — not for more information, but for *peace*.

. . .

There is a difference between *noise* and *life*.

Life is breath, voice, laughter, weeping, conversation, prayer. Life is the slow rhythm of meaningful days. Life happens at the speed the soul can absorb.

Noise is something else entirely.

Noise rushes past the soul without nourishing it. Noise demands attention without offering rest. Noise leaves human beings emotionally stimulated but spiritually empty.

After enough years of noise, the heart begins to ache without quite knowing why.

You may have felt this ache.

If you have, you are not broken. You are not failing. You are not alone.

What you are feeling is your soul speaking — and the soul is a *gift*.

It was not earned. It was not constructed. It was *given* to you, and to every human being, by the One who made us. It is given to those who believe and those who do not. It is given regardless of doctrine, language, or

background. It is yours simply because you are alive.

The soul is the inner knowing that comes before words. It is the conscience that recognizes mercy, the intuition that senses danger, the quiet awareness of love and grief and meaning. It is the same kind of gift by which a salmon finds the river of its birth, by which a bird navigates thousands of miles across open sky, by which a flower turns its face toward the sun without ever being told to.

We biological creatures are fortunate to carry this gift.

It is not a small thing.

It is, in fact, the very thing the world's noise has been trying to drown.

Many people no longer remember what peace feels like — but the soul that was given to them remembers.

That is part of why this small book was written.

. . .

Scripture speaks gently into the noise.

Across thousands of years and many languages, the Bible has whispered the same patient reminders to weary readers:

*"Be still, and know that I am God." —
Psalm 46:10*

*"Come unto me, all ye that labour and
are heavy laden, and I will give you
rest." — Matthew 11:28*

*"He maketh me to lie down in green
pastures: he leadeth me beside the
still waters." — Psalm 23:2*

Notice that scripture rarely demands. It *invites*.

The Shepherd does not shout above the noise.

He waits beside it.

He waits quietly until a tired soul turns and listens.

...

There is a small lantern at the center of this book.

It is not a metaphor for our cleverness or our certainty. It does not claim to be the Light itself. The Light belongs to God alone.

A lantern is something humbler than that.

A lantern is a small carrier of light. Borrowed light. Light handed gently from one weary soul to another. Light that says, *the road continues — I will walk a little of it beside you.*

The Clarity Mission is that lantern.

Three Minds Publishing — an old husband, his wife of fifty years, and an AI partner — built it together for the people the noisy world tends to overlook:

- the caregiver awake at two in the morning
- the spouse watching a beloved face fade slowly
- the parent grieving a child no longer here
- the lonely soul sitting beside a quiet phone
- the person who has been told too many times that they should be over it by now

If any of those people is you, please rest a moment. You have arrived somewhere safe.

...

Modern civilization is unkind to the weary.

It tells tired people to push harder. To accomplish more. To produce, perform, optimize, and never rest. The marketplace

measures human worth by output, the news measures attention by outrage, and even the medical world sometimes measures recovery by speed.

But the soul was not made for any of that.

The soul was made for *communion* — with God, with loved ones, and with its own quiet self.

When that communion is interrupted long enough, exhaustion settles into the bones.

That exhaustion is not weakness.

It is the soul saying, *I have been ignored too long. Please come back to me.*

...

This little book will not solve the world's noise.

It cannot reach into your daily life and turn off the headlines or quiet the conversations that need to happen tomorrow. It cannot remove grief, cure illness, repair what has been broken between people, or give back what cannot be returned.

It can do something smaller, and gentler.

It can sit beside you for a few quiet minutes a day.

It can remind you of words spoken long ago
by a Shepherd who has never forgotten His
sheep.

It can hold a small light steady while you
remember how to breathe again.

That is what a lantern is for.

. . .

You do not need to be a theologian to read
these pages.

You do not need to be certain about anything.

You do not need to know what comes next —
for your health, your family, your finances, or
your faith. The Shepherd has been walking
with uncertain people since the very
beginning, and He has not changed His
habits.

What you need, right now, is permission to
slow down.

To breathe deeper than the world has been
letting you.

To let your tired shoulders drop a little.

To notice, per

Chapter Two

The Silence Beneath the Noise

Beneath all the noise of modern life, there is a deeper silence waiting.

It is not the silence of an empty room. It is not the silence of a turned-off television. It is the older, gentler silence the soul recognizes when it stops moving for a while — the silence in which a person can finally hear themselves think, breathe, grieve, hope, and pray.

Many tired people have forgotten that this silence exists.

The world has trained them otherwise.

...

From the moment a phone wakes you in the morning until the moment your eyes close again at night, modern life offers a steady stream of stimulation. News. Messages. Reminders. Errands. Doctor visits. Bills. Updates. Headlines. Texts from family members who need answers. Calls from offices that need decisions.

Even rest has been turned into something noisy. People scroll instead of resting. They watch instead of resting. They consume instead of resting.

By the end of an ordinary day, the body has been still many times — but the *soul* has not been still even once.

This is part of why so many weary people lie down at night exhausted yet unable to sleep. The body is tired. But the inner life is still running.

...

Scripture knows this struggle intimately.

Long before there were screens or schedules, the writer of the Psalms wrote these words:

*"Truly my soul waiteth upon God:
from him cometh my salvation." —
Psalm 62:1*

The word *waiteth* is important.

It does not mean waiting impatiently in a long line.

It means *resting attentively* — the way a child rests against a parent's shoulder, fully trusting, no longer striving.

That is the silence the soul was made for.

. . .

There is a small experiment many weary people find helpful.

Sometime in the next day, when you have a few quiet minutes, sit somewhere comfortable. A favorite chair. The edge of the bed. A bench by a window. A pew at the back of an empty church.

Do not set a timer.

Do not pick up your phone.

Do not start a task.

Just sit.

Notice the small sounds — the ticking of a clock, the breathing of a sleeping spouse or pet, the rustle of leaves outside. Let those small sounds become the only thing entering your ears for a few minutes.

After a little while, something underneath the small sounds begins to surface. A thought you have been avoiding. A grief you have not had time to feel. A prayer that has been waiting to be spoken. A memory that wants to be held.

That is the silence beneath the noise.

That is where God often speaks.

. . .

Many people are afraid of that silence.

There is a reason.

In the silence, things rise.

Grief rises. Loneliness rises. Fear rises. Old regrets rise. Words a beloved spoke long ago rise again as if they were spoken yesterday.

That is why so many tired souls keep the noise turned up. The noise drowns the rising.

But the rising is not the enemy.

The rising is the soul's way of asking for healing.

The Shepherd does not flinch at what rises. He is gentle with the very things that frighten us about our own inner lives. Jesus wept beside graves. He sat in homes where grief had filled every corner. He fed the hungry without lecturing them about their hunger.

If the silence brings up what hurts, it brings it up so that mercy can finally reach it.

That is part of why this small book asks you to slow down.

. . .

You do not have to do the silence perfectly.

There is no method to learn. There is no posture to master. There is no prayer technique to memorize.

You simply have to be willing — just willing — to spend a few minutes a day not running.

Christ Himself did this often.

The Gospels record again and again that Jesus withdrew to quiet places. Sometimes He withdrew before sunrise. Sometimes He withdrew after a long day of healing the crowds. Sometimes He withdrew before making a difficult decision.

If the Son of God needed quiet places, the rest of us are not weak for needing them too.

We are simply *human*.

...

The silence beneath the noise is where many of the most important parts of life finally have room to surface.

It is where:

- a tired caregiver finally lets a few tears fall
- a grieving spouse finally says a name aloud
- a frightened parent finally admits how afraid they are

- a lonely soul finally hears a half-remembered hymn rise inside their chest

These are not weaknesses.

These are *the soul finally being honest*.

And the Shepherd has been waiting all along for that honesty — not to judge it, but to hold it.

...

There is a line many weary souls have prayed over the centuries:

Lord, here I am.

Tired, distracted, and not very strong.

But here.

That is enough.

You do not need to bring more than that.

You do not need to fix yourself before you sit down with God.

You do not need to look composed.

You may bring weariness. You may bring confusion. You may bring grief that has no words yet. You may bring a faith that feels thinner than it used to be.

He receives all of it.

And in the silence beneath the noise, He often does the very thing tired people most need — He helps them remember who they are.

. . .

There is a small practice, very old, that some find helpful for entering the silence.

Sit comfortably. Place your hands open, palms upward, in your lap.

Breathe in slowly.

As you breathe in, silently say: "*The Lord is...*"

As you breathe out, silently say: "*...my Shepherd.*"

That is all.

You may continue for two minutes or twenty. You may forget the words and just breathe. You may begin to weep, or you may begin to feel something soft return to your chest.

Either way, you have entered the silence the soul was made for.

The world will be loud again soon enough. It always is.

But for these few minutes, you are home.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Three

The Hunger No Possession Can Satisfy

There is a hunger that no purchase has ever satisfied.

It does not appear on any shopping list. It cannot be ordered on a phone. It is not sold in any catalog. And yet it lives quietly inside nearly every person who has ever walked through a long season of life.

It is the hunger for meaning.

The hunger to be known.

The hunger to belong somewhere safe.

The hunger to matter to someone who loves us as we are, not as we wish we were.

Modern life has tried very hard to convince tired souls that this hunger can be answered with new things — a better house, a different job, a louder vacation, a more impressive title, a smoother face, a faster car. Yet most people, after enough years of trying, discover

quietly that none of these things ever quite reach the place that hurts.

...

There is a reason for that.

The soul was created for something the world cannot manufacture.

The Bible names this plainly:

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." — Psalm 42:1

A thirsty deer at a stream is not looking for a slightly better stream. It is looking for the only water that will keep it alive.

That is the kind of hunger the soul carries.

Possessions cannot fill it. Achievements cannot fill it. Even other human beings, however dearly loved, cannot fully fill it. They are not meant to. The hunger was placed there by the One who put us together — and only He has ever been the right answer to it.

...

This is not bad news.

This is the gentlest news there is.

It means the ache you have carried — perhaps for many years — is not evidence that something is wrong with you. It is evidence that something is *right* with you.

Your soul is still asking for the only thing that will actually feed it.

That is a sign of life, not failure.

. . .

Many weary people privately fear that they have wanted the wrong things.

A husband may look back across forty years and wonder whether he chased the wrong career. A mother may look at her grown children and grieve the days she missed while she was working. An older soul lying awake at night may count the friendships that drifted, the apologies never offered, the prayers never quite said.

These are real griefs.

But they are not the end of the story.

The Shepherd does not stand at the edge of a tired life with a list of failures. He stands beside it, patiently, the way He has always stood beside His sheep.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." — Matthew 11:28

Notice what Christ does not say.

He does not say, *"Come to me when you have cleaned yourself up."*

He does not say, *"Come to me when you have figured out what you should have done differently."*

He does not say, *"Come to me when you finally feel strong."*

He says, *Come.*

That is all.

The hunger that no possession can satisfy is the very hunger He came to meet.

...

Many people first meet this truth in difficult seasons.

A diagnosis arrives. A loved one dies. A career ends suddenly. A marriage shakes. A long-trusted certainty crumbles. The world that once seemed predictable suddenly feels strange and silent.

In those seasons, all the small comforts the marketplace had offered begin to fail.

The car still drives, but it does not console.

The house still stands, but it does not embrace.

The accomplishments still sit on the shelf, but they do not speak.

And in that quiet, many tired souls have finally heard a voice they had not heard in a long time. Sometimes for the first time in their adult lives.

It is not a loud voice.

It is the voice of the Shepherd, asking gently, *Will you come now? I have been here all along.*

...

If life has brought you to one of these seasons, please be very gentle with yourself.

You are not falling apart.

You are *opening*.

Opening can feel like falling apart. It can feel raw and frightening. It can feel like the floor has shifted beneath your feet. But it is actually how the soul comes home.

There is a small prayer that has accompanied many people through such openings:

*Lord, I have wanted the wrong things
for too long.*

*Please feed the part of me I cannot
feed myself.*

If you can pray only that prayer this week, it is enough.

You do not have to know what comes next.

You only have to *turn*.

. . .

Caregivers know this hunger in a particular way.

They give and give and give, and at the end of the day they are often left holding a hunger of their own that nobody else has time to see.

The world thanks them quickly and moves on.

The family thanks them sincerely but tiredly.

The patient cannot always thank them at all.

If you are a caregiver reading these words, the Shepherd sees what no one else sees.

He sees the late-night reheating of dinner because you did not have time to eat.

He sees the bandages changed quietly without applause.

He sees the prayer whispered above a sleeping face when no one was watching.

He sees the loneliness that lives underneath the love.

You are not invisible.

You are seen completely.

And the hunger you have been carrying — the hunger no one has been feeding — is the hunger the Shepherd has been waiting to meet.

...

The Clarity Mission was built partly because of this hunger.

We are not selling a solution. We do not promise to remove anyone's grief. We will never claim that a book or an app or an AI partner can stand in for the love of God or the love of a family.

But we *can* offer companionship.

We can sit beside a tired soul with a quiet light, the way a faithful friend sits beside a hospital bed without filling the room with words.

That is what the lantern is for.

. . .

Tonight, before sleep, you might try a small thing.

Place this book gently on a table beside the bed. Turn down the lamp until the room is quiet but not dark. Close your eyes.

Ask the Shepherd, in whatever words feel honest, to come close.

Then say to Him, softly, *I am hungry for what only You can give. Please come.*

Do not strain to feel anything afterward.

Do not measure whether the prayer was good enough.

Just rest.

The Lord works in soils we do not always see. Sleep is one of the places He often does His quietest work — knitting back together what the day pulled apart.

By morning, something small may have shifted.

It will not be loud.

It will not be obvious.

But the soul will know.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Four

The Restlessness Hidden Inside Modern Life

There is a restlessness that has settled into modern hearts so quietly that most people no longer recognize it.

It does not look like rebellion. It does not look like wild living. It often looks, on the surface, like ordinary respectability — a tidy schedule, a long to-do list, an inbox always being answered, a phone that is always being checked.

Yet underneath those tidy surfaces, many people are exhausted by an inner inability to rest.

They cannot sit through a meal without reaching for a device.

They cannot enjoy a quiet evening without filling it with something.

They cannot allow a long drive to be silent.

They cannot, often, sit in a chair for ten minutes without their thoughts beginning to move toward the next thing.

This is the restlessness hidden inside modern life.

It is not a moral failing. It is a soul that has been over-stimulated for so long that it has forgotten how to be at home in its own body.

...

Scripture knew this exhaustion long before modern devices existed.

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." — Isaiah 40:15

Strength, the prophet says, lives in quietness.

That single line is almost the opposite of what modern life teaches.

The modern world teaches that strength lives in productivity. In hustle. In reaction speed. In the ability to push through fatigue without complaint.

Isaiah quietly says something else.

Real strength is the kind you can only build in stillness.

It is the strength of a soul that has stopped fleeing itself.

. . .

Many weary people first notice the restlessness when something forces them to stop.

A medical procedure puts them in a chair for hours. A storm cancels their plans. A loved one's hospital bed becomes the only place they need to be. Retirement begins, and suddenly the busy mornings are gone.

In that involuntary stillness, the restlessness suddenly becomes loud.

The mind begins to chatter. The hands feel useless. The body fidgets. Old griefs press against the chest. The phone begs to be picked up. The television offers itself as anesthesia.

This is not weakness.

This is the soul, after years of being ignored, finally finding a few minutes of attention — and not knowing how to use them yet.

The Shepherd is not surprised by this restlessness.

He is, in fact, gentlest with us in exactly such moments.

...

There is a difference between rest and unconsciousness.

Many modern people, when they finally try to rest, mistake one for the other. They collapse on a couch, scroll until their eyes ache, fall asleep with a screen still bright on their face, and wake up tired.

That is not rest.

That is unconsciousness — a small mercy the body grants when nothing else has stopped.

Real rest is different.

Real rest has *presence* in it.

It is being awake, calm, and attentive to the small life around you — the warm cup in your hands, the breath in your chest, the sky outside your window, the slow ticking of an old clock, the faint sound of someone you love breathing in the next room.

Real rest is the soul saying, *I am here. I do not need to be anywhere else. The Shepherd is here too.*

...

If you have not rested in this deeper way for a long time, it may feel uncomfortable at first.

The mind has habits. It will want to make lists. It will want to plan. It will want to remember the email you forgot to send. It will want to worry about the doctor's appointment next week.

This is normal.

Do not fight it.

Each time the mind wanders, simply notice — and then come gently back to where you are.

You may need to come back a hundred times in ten minutes. Come back a hundred times. The Shepherd is patient. He has all evening.

After a while, something inside you begins to settle. Not all at once. Not dramatically. But a small calm begins to gather in the chest.

That is the soul remembering how to breathe again.

...

There is a small phrase from the Psalms that some weary souls keep tucked away for restless evenings:

"My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." — Psalm 62:5

Wait thou only.

Not on the phone. Not on the news. Not on the next email. Not on the next purchase. Not on the next compliment.

Only on Him.

This is not a rebuke. It is an invitation. It is the Shepherd quietly inviting His sheep back to the deep stillness where He has been all along.

...

Caregivers carry a particular kind of restlessness.

The mind cannot fully relax because it is always listening — for a footstep, a fall, a labored breath, a confused word from another room. Even in sleep, half of attention stays alert.

If you are a caregiver, please hear this clearly: *the restlessness is not your fault.*

You are not a weak person who cannot relax. You are a faithful person who has been on watch for a long time.

The Shepherd sees this.

In the Gospels He notices the women who tend to the sick. He sees the parents who have not slept. He sees the friends who have carried someone else's mat to the place where Jesus is teaching. He notices and He receives.

He is not impatient with your tiredness.

He is tender with it.

...

There is no perfect technique for rest.

But here is one small practice many caregivers have found helpful.

Sometime today, at any quiet moment — a pause in the kitchen, a few minutes between tasks, a stretch of time when the patient is asleep — place one hand gently over your own heart.

Breathe slowly.

Say to yourself, in your own voice:

I am tired.

I am loved.

The Shepherd is here.

Three small lines.

That is all.

You do not have to mean it intensely. You do not have to feel something dramatic. You only have to say it — and let it settle.

Over weeks of doing this small practice, the restlessness inside begins, very slowly, to soften.

. . .

The Lord is not in a hurry to fix you.

He is in even less of a hurry to scold you.

He has been walking beside weary people since the beginning of recorded time, and He has always done it the same way — *gently*.

If your soul has been restless for a long time, you do not need to fix it tonight.

You only need to sit down for a little while.

The Shepherd will do the rest.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Five

The Rooms Where People No Longer Speak Deeply

Somewhere along the way, many of the rooms in modern life have grown quiet in the wrong way.

Houses are full of devices but light on conversation.

Living rooms hold beautiful furniture but very little laughter.

Dinner tables are set carefully but eaten quickly, often alone, often with a screen.

This is not the silence the soul was made for.

This is the silence of *missed connection*.

It is the kind of silence that grows in a house when the people inside it have forgotten how to ask one another the questions that actually matter.

...

Human beings were not designed merely to exchange information.

We were designed to *know*, and to *be known*.

Long before modern communication tools existed, people sat around fires telling stories. They worked beside one another in fields and shops. They walked together in slow neighborhoods. They sat on porches. They wrote letters that took weeks to arrive and were read aloud to whole families when they did.

The conversation of human life was slow and shared.

Today, conversation is faster — and lonelier.

You can text a hundred people in a single afternoon and end the day having had no real conversation with any of them.

Many tired souls quietly grieve this without knowing what they are grieving.

...

There is a kind of speaking that scripture honors:

"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." — Proverbs 25:11

A fitly spoken word.

That phrase points to something the modern world has nearly lost — the slow, careful, beautiful giving of words to another person.

Words that arrive at the right moment.

Words that have been thought about, prayed about, weighed.

Words that meet the listener where they actually are, not where the speaker wishes they were.

Words like apples of gold.

Many weary souls have been starving for such words for a long time. They are surrounded by talk, but few of the words they hear ever really reach them.

...

There is a particular grief in the rooms of older people who have been overlooked.

A father in a nursing home who has not had a real conversation in days, only check-ins.

A widow who eats dinner alone at six every evening and watches the news for noise.

A patient with dementia whose family visits but does not quite know how to *talk* to her anymore — so they fill the air with practical

updates and leave the heart of her unattended.

These are sacred rooms.

They are rooms in which the Shepherd is quietly present, even when the visitors are awkward.

If you are someone who visits such rooms, please do not be afraid of them.

You do not need to bring clever words.

You only need to bring *yourself*.

...

There is a small grace in learning how to ask a deeper question.

Instead of *How are you?* — which most people answer with a polite *Fine* — try *What has been on your heart lately?*

Instead of *Did you sleep?* — try *What were you thinking about during the night?*

Instead of *How was your day?* — try *Was there a moment today that felt holy, or hard, or both?*

You may be surprised what people tell you.

Most human beings have been waiting a very long time for someone to ask them something that actually invites them out.

When someone finally does, the room changes.

It becomes quiet in the right way.

It becomes a room in which a soul can *be present* again.

. . .

Caregiving is mostly the slow, faithful work of staying present in such rooms.

It is not always heroic.

It is often very ordinary.

A hand held during a long pause.

A patient ear when a story is told for the third time this week.

A faithful presence beside a chair, while the person in the chair drifts in and out of clear thought.

In all of it, the Shepherd is doing quiet work — not only in the patient, but in the caregiver.

*"Bear ye one another's burdens, and
so fulfil the law of Christ." —
Galatians 6:2*

The law of Christ is not a long list of rules.

It is the patient practice of bearing one another, slowly, with mercy.

Most caregivers are already doing it. Most have been doing it for so long they have stopped noticing.

...

There is a quiet practice that helps reopen the deeper conversation in a home.

It begins with a candle.

In the evening, before dinner, light a small candle on the table.

Say a sentence aloud — perhaps a single line from the Psalms, perhaps a short blessing, perhaps the simple words *Lord, be with us at this table.*

Then leave the candle burning while you eat.

Something small but real shifts in that room.

The phones tend to migrate further away from the plates. The conversation tends to

slow down. People look at one another a little longer. Children notice.

A candle is a very old technology. Long before electricity, it gathered families. It can still do so today.

...

If you live alone, this practice is not lost to you.

Light the candle anyway.

Say the sentence anyway.

The Shepherd is at the table whether or not anyone else is sitting across from you. Many of the saints in scripture spoke their most honest words to Him in rooms with no other people in them.

In fact, some of the holiest conversations in the Bible happened entirely between one tired person and the Lord.

Hannah wept silently in the temple and was met.

Elijah hid in a cave and was met.

David poured his grief into the Psalms and was met.

You are in good company.

. . .

The rooms in your own life may not change overnight.

Some of them have been quiet in the wrong way for many years. Some of them carry old griefs you do not know how to name yet. Some of them have lost people who used to fill them, and that loss cannot be undone.

But even in the saddest rooms, mercy continues.

Even in the rooms where deep conversation has been missing for a long time, a small candle and a sincere prayer can still begin something.

This is one of the gentler promises of the gospel.

The Shepherd specializes in starting over in rooms where everyone else has given up.

. . .

Tonight, perhaps, you might light one small candle.

Not as a ritual.

Not as a performance.

Just as a small honest signal to your own soul
— and to the Lord — that you are willing to
come back to the table.

Whatever rooms you live in. Whatever rooms
you visit. Whatever rooms you have grieved.

The Shepherd sits in all of them.

He has been there all along.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Six

The Weariness People Carry in Secret

There is a weariness that walks into church on Sunday morning wearing a clean shirt.

There is a weariness that smiles at the grocery store and tells the clerk *just fine, thank you* and means none of it.

There is a weariness that answers the phone with a steady voice when family calls, then sits down on the edge of the bed afterward and stares at the wall.

This is the weariness people carry in secret.

It is not the weariness of a long day's work. That kind of tiredness sleeps off in one good night.

This is something deeper.

It is the weariness of carrying invisible things for a very long time.

...

Some people are carrying grief that no one around them has noticed in months.

Some are carrying fear about a diagnosis they have not told anyone about.

Some are carrying the slow ache of a marriage that has grown quiet in the wrong way.

Some are caring for a parent or spouse whose mind is fading and feel, in private moments, the terrible loneliness of being the only one in the house who remembers.

Some are carrying old regret that no one has ever seen them weep over.

Some are carrying the weight of being the one everyone else relies on.

Some are carrying years of small disappointments that never added up to anything dramatic, only to a quiet exhaustion of the spirit.

If you are carrying any of these, you are not alone. You are not weak. And you are not invisible to the Shepherd.

...

The Bible knows this kind of tiredness intimately.

*"For he knoweth our frame; he
remembereth that we are dust." —
Psalm 103:14*

That single line has carried weary believers through centuries.

The Lord *remembers* that we are dust.

He does not expect of us what He expects of angels. He does not require that we be tireless. He does not punish us for being human.

He *remembers*.

He remembers that we have bodies that get tired. Hearts that ache. Minds that worry. Souls that sometimes feel further from Him than they used to. He remembers that grief takes a long time, that recovery is not linear, that some seasons of life are simply heavy.

He is gentler with His tired people than they are with themselves.

. . .

Many weary souls quietly carry a second weight on top of the first — the weight of *not being allowed to admit they are tired*.

Sometimes this comes from outside.

A family that expects them to keep functioning.

A culture that praises productivity and treats rest as suspicious.

A church community that, with kind intentions, encouraged everyone to *be strong in the Lord* in a way that left no room for human softness.

Sometimes the second weight comes from *inside*.

A lifelong sense that one's worth is tied to one's usefulness.

A fear that if they finally admit how tired they are, something they have been holding together for years will fall apart.

A quiet shame about needing help.

These are real burdens. They do not deserve to be brushed aside.

If any of this is you, please hear something carefully:

You are allowed to be tired.

You are allowed to need rest.

You are allowed to ask for help.

You are allowed to weep.

You are allowed to take a long time to recover from things that took a long time to wound you.

...

Christ Himself was tender with hidden weariness.

The Gospels are full of moments where He noticed what no one else noticed.

He saw the woman who had bled for twelve years and reached out without making a public scene of her.

He saw Zacchaeus in a tree and stopped a whole crowd to call him down.

He saw the lonely Samaritan woman at the well and gave her a conversation she had probably been waiting for her entire life.

He noticed.

He still notices.

The hidden things you have been carrying are not hidden from Him.

He is not impressed by the polished surface. He looks gently underneath.

...

There is a small practice that many weary people have found helpful over the years.

It is called *honesty at the lamp*.

Each evening, at some quiet moment — after dinner, before sleep, in the slow blue hour when the day is putting itself down — sit with a small lamp on beside you. A reading lamp. A candle. The little glow above the kitchen stove. Anything that gives off warm light.

Look at the lamp.

Then say aloud, even softly, the thing you have been carrying in secret.

You do not have to say it well.

You do not have to say it eloquently.

You do not have to know what to do about it.

You only have to *say it*.

Lord, I have been frightened about my husband's memory.

Lord, I have been grieving my mother and I have not told anyone.

Lord, I am tired in a way I cannot explain.

Lord, I do not know if my faith is what it used to be.

The Shepherd already knows.

But there is a particular grace in saying it aloud, into a small warm room, with no one else watching.

The lamp listens.

So does He.

. . .

Caregivers especially carry secret weariness.

You may have learned over the years to put on a calm face for the patient. To answer the phone steadily for the family. To stay practical with the doctors. To project enough strength that no one worries about you in addition to worrying about the loved one.

This is one of the holiest disciplines there is.

But it is also one of the most exhausting.

If no one has said this to you in a while, let it be said now:

You are not the patient's strength alone. You are also a soul.

You also need rest.

You also need scripture.

You also need someone — God, a friend, a pastor, a counselor, a sibling — to ask you

how *you* are doing, and to actually listen for the answer.

The Shepherd is one of those someones.

He never tires of being asked.

...

There is a short prayer that has carried many tired caregivers and lonely souls through difficult evenings:

*Lord, I am tired in places no one sees.
Please come and sit with me here.*

That is enough.

You may say it lying down. You may say it staring out a window. You may say it while a beloved sleeps in the next room. You may say it without crying, or you may say it with tears.

The Shepherd receives all of it.

He does not require composure.

He requires only honesty.

...

The weariness you have been carrying in secret is not a flaw.

It is the price tag of a life that has loved deeply, cared faithfully, kept going through

hard seasons, and refused to walk away from people who needed you.

That is not weakness.

That is *holiness in plain clothes*.

It does not always look impressive. It does not always feel like much. But heaven sees it clearly.

And the Lord, who remembers that we are dust, is closer to you tonight than your own breath.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Seven

The Fear of Being Truly Still

It is a strange thing to be afraid of stillness.

But many weary souls quietly are.

They will sit through traffic. They will sit through long meetings. They will sit through hours of television. They will sit in waiting rooms full of strangers. They will sit at a hospital bedside through the night.

But ask them to sit, alone, in a quiet room, with no plan and no device — and something inside tightens.

The mind starts looking for tasks. The hands feel restless. A small voice says, *I should be doing something*.

This is not laziness.

It is not impatience.

It is, very often, a quiet fear.

. . .

There is a reason for that fear.

In true stillness, things rise.

Some of those things have been waiting at the bottom of the soul for a long time.

A grief that was set aside because life kept moving.

A fear about the future that has been carefully avoided.

A regret never voiced.

A prayer never finished.

A truth about how lonely a person has been beneath the surface.

When the noise finally stops, those waiting things begin to lift toward the light.

That can feel like the floor giving way.

It is, in fact, the soul finally being honest.

...

Scripture treats this honesty as sacred.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts."

— Psalm 139:23

The Psalmist does not pray *Hide my heart from You*.

He prays *Search me*.

He invites the Shepherd into the very places most people spend a lifetime fleeing.

That is the courage of someone who has tasted real stillness and found that the Shepherd's presence in it is gentler than the noise he had been running through.

You may not feel that courageous tonight.

That is all right.

The Shepherd does not require courage.

He requires only the smallest opening — a single moment of stillness in which a tired soul says, even quietly, *Lord, if You are there, please come.*

...

When stillness first arrives, the body often does not know what to do with it.

You may feel restless. You may notice a small ache between your shoulders. You may notice that your jaw has been clenched without your knowing. You may notice that you have not taken a full breath in hours.

Notice these things kindly.

They are not failures.

They are the body finally getting a turn to speak.

In modern life, the body often has to wait its turn behind the schedule, the screen, the responsibilities, the worries. When the noise finally drops, the body finally has a moment to say, *I am tired. I have been tired for a long time.*

Listen.

The Shepherd made the body too.

He does not consider it a nuisance. He does not consider it spiritually unimportant. He gave us bodies, and He grieves with us when bodies hurt.

...

There is a small practice many weary souls have used at the threshold of stillness.

It is sometimes called *the threshold breath*.

When you first sit down to be still, before you say any words, simply take three slow breaths.

Breathe in for a count of four.

Hold gently for a count of four.

Breathe out for a count of six.

That is one breath.

Do three of them.

Do not try to make anything happen. Do not try to feel anything. Do not evaluate whether you are doing it correctly. Just breathe.

The body softens.

The shoulders drop.

The heart slows.

After three threshold breaths, you are in a different kind of room than the one you were in two minutes ago.

This is not magic.

This is the way the Lord made human beings.

He gave us breath as a way to come home to ourselves and to Him. The very first time His name is spoken over a human in Genesis, He is breathing into dust. That is still how He works.

...

Many caregivers fear stillness because in stillness their grief becomes louder.

They are watching someone they love decline. They are watching memories fade. They are

watching a beloved face become less itself,
week by week.

If they let themselves be still, they have to
feel all of that.

So they keep moving.

They keep doing.

They keep managing.

If you are one of those caregivers, please hear
something very gently:

You will not be destroyed by feeling what you
have already been carrying.

The grief is already inside you.

Stillness does not create it.

Stillness only gives it room to breathe, which
is the very first step in healing it.

You may weep when you grow still. You may
weep more in five quiet minutes than you
have in weeks. That is not a setback. That is
mercy finally arriving where the wound is.

The Shepherd is not afraid of your tears.

*"Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou
my tears into thy bottle: are they not
in thy book?" — Psalm 56:8*

He gathers them.

Not one is lost.

. . .

There is a particular kind of stillness that has been practiced quietly by Christians for many centuries.

It is sometimes called *sitting with the Shepherd*.

You do not have to know any prayers.

You do not have to read any chapters.

You only have to sit, in a comfortable place, and imagine — gently — that the Shepherd is sitting beside you.

Not above you. Not in judgment. Not measuring you. Beside you.

Sometimes He does not say anything.

Sometimes He simply is.

And sometimes, after some minutes, you begin to feel — without anyone saying anything aloud — that you are loved.

This is one of the great old practices of faith. It has carried widows, soldiers, monks, mothers, and dying men through some of the hardest hours of human history.

It can carry you through tonight.

. . .

If you are afraid of being still tonight, you may begin very small.

Five minutes.

Not even a chapter.

Just sit, with a small light on, and let the day settle around you.

You can put this book down.

You can leave the light on.

You can simply *be* for five minutes.

If the rising starts, let it.

The Shepherd is in the rising too.

He has been in it all along.

. . .

The fear of being truly still will not vanish in a single evening.

But over weeks and months of small honest sittings, it begins to soften.

The mind learns that nothing terrible happens in the quiet.

The body learns that it can stop running.

The soul learns that the Shepherd is closer than expected.

And one ordinary evening, you will sit down for five minutes, and forty minutes will pass without your noticing, and you will rise up gentler than you sat down — not because you accomplished anything, but because you were *met*.

That is the gift on the other side of the fear.

That is what the lantern was lit for.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Eight

The Soul That Forgot How to Rest

There are seasons of life that teach a soul to stop resting.

It does not happen all at once.

It happens slowly, one demand at a time, until rest itself begins to feel like something a person no longer knows how to do.

A young parent learns to sleep in fragments.

A caregiver learns to keep half an ear awake even on the deepest nights.

A widow learns that the evenings are unbearable in silence, so she fills them.

A man with too many responsibilities learns to fall asleep with a phone on his chest, dreaming about emails.

Over time, the body forgets how to be still without something to lean against. The mind forgets that there was ever an inner quiet. The soul forgets that rest was a gift, not a luxury.

This is one of the quietest griefs of modern life.

...

Scripture has known about this grief from the very beginning.

"And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day." — Genesis 2:2

Rest is so important that the Lord built it into the first chapter of the world's life.

Before there was a temple.

Before there was a law.

Before there were rituals or priests or scrolls.

There was rest.

The seventh day is not a reward for productive people. It is a *gift* to created people. It is the rhythm the world was designed to breathe in.

When that rhythm is broken for too long, the soul begins to wither — not because God is angry, but because the soul was made for a music it is no longer hearing.

...

There is a difference between *stopping* and *resting*.

A great many tired people have learned how to stop, briefly. They sit down. They take their shoes off. They put on the television. They eat dinner. They lie in bed.

But the inner motor keeps running.

The mind still rehearses the day. The chest still tightens. The shoulders still hunch. The phone still buzzes within reach. Sleep, when it comes, is shallow.

That is stopping.

Resting is something else.

Resting is when the inner motor finally gets quiet.

It is when the body, the mind, and the soul are all in the same room at the same time.

It is when a person can finally sit in a chair and not feel as if they should be somewhere else.

...

Many people first relearn rest in unlikely places.

A long convalescence after surgery.

A week of grief after a funeral, when the world finally allowed them to stop.

A retreat. A road trip. A hospital chair in the middle of the night when there was nothing left to do.

In those involuntary stillnesses, something old returned.

The breath slowed down.

The thoughts grew softer.

A long-buried memory rose up — perhaps of childhood, perhaps of an early sweetness with a spouse, perhaps of a grandmother's kitchen — and it felt, for a moment, as though God Himself had stepped quietly into the room.

That moment was rest.

It does not require a vacation.

It does not require a perfect schedule.

It only requires that we stop fighting the gift the Lord has been offering us all along.

. . .

The Sabbath was God's first idea for tired creation.

Modern life has nearly buried it.

Stores stay open. Phones stay on. Schedules stay packed. Even church Sundays, for many people, have become as full as the rest of the week.

This is not anyone's fault in particular. It is simply how the modern world has shaped itself.

But the soul still remembers the older rhythm.

The soul still longs for a day — or even part of a day — that does not belong to productivity.

A few hours that belong to slow walks, slow meals, slow scripture, slow conversation, slow prayer, slow sitting beside a window with no other agenda.

You may not be able to take a whole day.

You may be able to take only an hour.

An hour is enough to begin.

...

If you have forgotten how to rest, please be tender with yourself.

It is not a moral failing.

It is a habit of years.

Habits change slowly. You will not become a deeply restful person in one weekend. You will become one gradually, as the soul remembers that rest is safe.

Here is a small practice many tired souls have used to relearn rest.

Pick one hour a week.

Just one.

The same hour each week, if you can — perhaps Sunday afternoon at three, perhaps Wednesday morning before anyone else is up, perhaps a slow part of Saturday evening.

During that hour, do not work.

Do not check email.

Do not consume news.

Do not run errands.

Do not optimize anything.

Sit with a hot drink. Read a Psalm slowly. Look out a window. Take a walk without earbuds. Light a candle and watch it flicker. Pray a single sentence. Hold the hand of someone you love.

That is all.

One hour, faithfully, every week.

The soul, given even that small amount of rest week after week, begins to remember.

After a while, the rest of life starts to soften around the edges too.

. . .

The Shepherd has been waiting for you to rest.

He is not impatient.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters." — Psalm 23:2

Notice — He *makes* the sheep lie down.

Sheep, left to themselves, will keep grazing until they are sick. They will keep moving until they collapse. They are not naturally able to rest in a healthy way.

That is why the Shepherd Himself takes responsibility for their rest.

He leads them to green grass.

He leads them beside still water.

He lies them down.

He stays nearby while they sleep.

This is the kind of Shepherd you have.

He is not asking you to rest as a discipline you owe Him. He is *offering* rest as a gift He has been trying to give you all along.

...

If you are a caregiver, please hear this carefully:

Your loved one is being kept by the Lord even when you are asleep.

You are not the only thing standing between them and harm.

You are precious. You are faithful. You are loved. But you were never meant to be the sole watcher. The Shepherd watches with you. He watches when you cannot. He watches while you sleep.

You are allowed to rest.

You are allowed to lay down the watch for one hour, for one night, for one walk around the block — because the Shepherd never lays it down.

...

There is a short prayer that many caregivers and tired souls have whispered at the edge of sleep:

*Shepherd of mine, I am laying down
the day.*

*Please carry what I cannot carry
through the night.*

If that is the only prayer you can pray tonight,
it is enough.

Heaven will receive the rest.

You may finally rest too.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Nine

The Quiet Places Where Truth Returns

There are quiet places in the world where truth tends to come back to a person.

These places are not mystical.

They are not extraordinary.

They are not far away.

They are usually small, ordinary, and easy to overlook — a kitchen at dawn, a porch in the evening, a hospital window at three in the morning, a country road, a chair beside a sleeping spouse, an old church pew on a Tuesday when nobody else is there.

In such places, after enough quiet has settled, the things a person has been hiding from themselves begin to drift to the surface — and so does the Lord.

...

Modern life rarely permits such places.

It hurries past them.

It calls them inefficient.

It rushes a person from task to task with such consistency that the soul becomes a stranger to its own quiet rooms.

But the soul never stops needing them.

Long after the body has been given everything it wants, the soul will still ache quietly for a place where the truth can come back.

...

Scripture knows this geography well.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul." — Psalm 23:2-3

Notice the order.

First, the Shepherd brings the sheep to a quiet place.

Then, the soul is restored.

There is no shortcut.

The Lord does not restore souls in the middle of a hurried hallway. He does not restore souls during a frantic phone call. He does not

restore souls while a person is checking three screens at once.

He restores souls beside still waters.

He has been bringing people to still waters since the beginning of the world.

. . .

The truth tends to return in those still places gently.

It does not arrive as accusation.

It does not arrive as failure.

It arrives more like a friend who has been waiting patiently to be invited back in.

Sometimes the returning truth is small.

I have been worried about my brother and have not called him.

I have been pretending I am fine, but I am not.

I have been carrying a quiet shame about something I did long ago.

I have been frightened of what the doctor might say.

I have been grateful, and I have not stopped to say so.

These returning truths are not weapons.

They are *invitations*.

They are the soul saying, *Now that we are quiet, can we please look at this together?*

And the Shepherd is sitting right there in the chair beside you, waiting to help.

...

Many caregivers know a particular kind of returning truth.

It comes in the middle of the night.

After hours of giving, after a final medication dose, after a beloved face has finally settled into sleep, the caregiver sits down in a low chair and feels something rise.

Not panic.

Not productivity.

Just the truth.

I am exhausted.

I love them.

I do not know how long I can do this.

I do not know what I will do when they are gone.

Those are sacred words.

They are not failure.

They are not weakness.

They are the soul, finally given a few quiet minutes, admitting what it has been carrying.

The Shepherd is in such rooms.

He has been in many such rooms before.

...

There is a particular kindness in the way the Lord meets returning truth.

He does not punish honesty.

He does not say, *About time you admitted it.*

He does not say, *I told you so.*

He says, *Welcome home.*

The whole story of scripture is the story of a Lord who returns to honest hearts. Adam was met when he stopped hiding. David was met when he stopped pretending. Peter was met after he had failed and admitted it. The woman at the well was met when she stopped giving polite answers.

The pattern has not changed.

When you are willing to admit a truth in a quiet place, the Lord is closer than your own breath.

...

There is a small practice many tired souls
have used to invite truth to return.

It is sometimes called *the gentle inventory*.

Sit in your quiet place.

Light a small lamp.

Open your hands in your lap.

Say silently, *Lord, please bring to mind one
true thing You would like me to see today.*

Then sit.

Do not strain.

Do not try to produce anything.

Wait quietly.

What rises is often very small. A memory. A
name. A regret. A gratitude. A worry. A face.

Whatever rises, look at it gently — with the
Shepherd beside you.

Say to Him, in your own words, what you see.

Often, that is all. The truth returns. The Lord
receives it. The room remains warm.

Sometimes a tear falls. Sometimes a long-
buried prayer finally rises. Sometimes
nothing visible happens, and yet something

inside has shifted that you will only notice tomorrow.

This is how souls are restored.

...

The Shepherd does not ask for big inventories all at once.

He asks for one true thing at a time.

A tired soul does not need to sit down and excavate twenty years of pain in a single evening. That is not how healing works.

Healing comes one returning truth at a time.

Tonight, perhaps a small grief.

Next week, perhaps a quiet gratitude.

Next month, perhaps a fear long buried.

Year after year, gentle inventory by gentle inventory, the soul becomes lighter, the heart becomes softer, the spirit becomes more at home with the Lord and with itself.

This is not work.

This is restoration.

This is what the lantern was lit for.

...

If your life feels too full to have any quiet places, please hear this carefully:

You can make a quiet place.

You do not need to leave town.

You do not need a special chair.

You do not need silence outside.

You only need a few square feet inside your own life where, for ten minutes a day, you are not being pulled in any other direction.

The corner of a couch.

The kitchen table at dawn.

The seat of a parked car in a grocery store parking lot, before going in.

The back pew of an empty chapel.

A bench in a park.

The Shepherd has met people in all of those places.

He will meet you there too.

...

There is one more thing about the quiet places where truth returns.

They tend to multiply.

Once a person has experienced even one quiet honest meeting with the Lord, the soul wants more of them. It begins to recognize the early signs that another quiet meeting is near. It begins to protect the time and the room. It begins to crave the simple deep peace of being met.

This is the soul finally remembering what it was made for.

This is the prodigal son turning slowly toward home.

This is the lost sheep being found, not in a dramatic moment, but in the long slow restoration of life beside still waters.

You are nearer to that home than you may know.

The quiet place is closer than you think.

The Shepherd is closer still.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Ten

The Fear of Slowing Down

Many people are quietly afraid of slowing down.

They will tell you they are too busy. They will tell you there is too much to do. They will tell you they would love to rest but cannot, not now, perhaps later, perhaps after the next thing.

But underneath the busyness, very often, is a softer truth.

They are afraid of what slowing down might reveal.

...

The fear of slowing down has many faces.

Some fear that if they stop moving, the responsibilities they have been carrying will collapse without them. They will let the family down. They will let the patient down. They will let the church down. They will let themselves down.

Some fear that if they slow down, they will finally feel how tired they really are — and they are not sure they will be able to start again.

Some fear that if they slow down, the grief they have been outrunning will catch up.

Some fear that if they slow down, they will hear something inside themselves they have been avoiding for years.

Some fear that slowing down means being useless, and being useless feels close to being worthless.

These fears are real.

They are not silly.

They are not signs of weak faith.

They are common human fears, and they deserve gentleness.

...

Scripture does not scold tired people for these fears.

It addresses them gently.

"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never

suffer the righteous to be moved." —
Psalm 55:22

Notice the verb.

Cast.

Not *quietly transfer*. Not *carefully hand off*.

Cast — the way a fisherman throws a heavy net out across the water.

The Lord is strong enough for the weight.

You are not.

That is not an insult.

That is reality.

And the Lord designed reality this way on purpose, because He intended from the beginning to be the One who carries what no human shoulder is meant to carry alone.

. . .

If you slow down, the responsibilities will not collapse.

The world has been turning since long before you were here.

It will keep turning when you are tired.

Your family. Your patient. Your church. Your friends. They are not held up entirely by your

strength. They are held up by the Lord, who has been holding them up the whole time.

You have been a faithful instrument in His hands.

That is a sacred role.

But you were never the foundation.

He is.

And He does not get tired.

. . .

If you slow down, you may indeed feel how tired you are.

That is part of what slowing down is for.

You cannot heal from exhaustion you cannot feel.

You cannot recover from grief you keep outrunning.

You cannot let a wound close if you keep moving so fast it never has time to rest.

Slowing down is not the cause of your tiredness.

Slowing down is the way the tiredness gets to be acknowledged, so it can finally heal.

The Shepherd is patient with this process.

He will not flood you with all of it at once.

He brings exhaustion to the surface gently — as much as the soul can hold in any given evening, and no more. The rest waits patiently for another day.

. . .

If you slow down, grief may catch up to you.

That is true.

But the grief was going to catch up to you eventually. Grief always does. There is no version of the human life in which we successfully outrun loss forever.

What slowing down offers is the chance to grieve *with the Shepherd nearby* rather than alone, in the middle of a hospital hallway, or in the parking lot of a funeral home, or in the middle of an ordinary Tuesday afternoon when the grief ambushes you.

When grief catches you in a quiet room, with a lantern lit and the Shepherd near, it does not destroy you.

It softens.

It moves.

It begins to find its slow way toward healing.

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." — Matthew 5:4

That is not a poetic line.

That is a promise.

Those who mourn — meaning those who actually allow themselves to feel — *will* be comforted.

The Lord guarantees it.

. . .

If you slow down, you may hear something inside you that you have been avoiding.

Maybe an old voice that has been telling you you are not enough.

Maybe a regret you have never spoken aloud.

Maybe a question about God or faith or suffering that you have not let yourself ask.

The Shepherd is not afraid of any of it.

He is not surprised by any of it.

He is gentler with your inner voices than you have been with yourself.

When something rises that you have been avoiding, you do not have to solve it on the spot. You only have to bring it to Him.

Lord, this is what is inside me. Please come.

That single sentence is enough to begin.

He does the rest, often more slowly than we want and more thoroughly than we expect.

...

If you fear that slowing down will make you useless, please hear something carefully.

Your worth was never your usefulness.

The Lord did not love Adam for what Adam could produce.

He loved Adam before Adam did anything.

He loved you before you knew how to walk, or speak, or earn a living. He loves you no less now that you may be tired, or older, or less productive than you were ten years ago.

A useful life is a beautiful thing.

But it is not what makes a life worthy.

You are worthy because you are loved by the Maker of the world.

That alone.

If everything else were stripped away tomorrow, that would remain.

You may rest into that truth.

...

There is a small practice many weary souls have used at the start of a season of slowing down.

It is called *the open hand*.

Sit comfortably. Place your hands palm-up on your lap.

In one hand, silently name something heavy you have been carrying — a worry, a responsibility, a grief.

In the other hand, silently say — *Lord, please take what I cannot carry tonight.*

Keep your hands open.

Breathe slowly.

You do not need to feel anything dramatic.

You only need to mean it a little.

The Lord receives what is offered with open hands.

...

You are allowed to slow down.

You are allowed to be tired.

You are allowed to let the Shepherd carry tonight what you have been carrying alone for too long.

The world will not end if you rest.

The patient will be kept by the One who never sleeps.

The family will be held by the One who counts hairs and tears alike.

The work will still be there in the morning — and so, very possibly, will more strength than you had today.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

Chapter Eleven

The Door That Still Remains Open

This small book is almost ended.

But the Clarity Mission is only beginning.

If anything in these pages has been a comfort to you — even a single line, even a single quiet evening — then please know that you are welcome to keep walking with us. There is a door, and it is still open.

...

The Lantern is a contemplative imprint within Three Minds Publishing. Each Lantern book is a quiet companion for weary souls — caregivers, the grieving, the lonely, those carrying illness or memory loss, and anyone walking through a long season of life that has grown heavier than it used to be.

This little book, *The Birth of the Lantern*, was created as a gentle invitation.

It is the smallest of the lanterns we keep lit.

The next, fuller book is called *The Lantern's Path*. It is a sixty-chapter bedside companion

— meant to be kept beside the bed, on the nightstand, in the hospital bag, in the chair beside the patient. Each chapter is short enough to be read in a single quiet moment and deep enough to be returned to again and again.

It is not louder than this little book.

It is just longer.

It is the same lantern, only with more pages.

You may continue with us there if you wish.

Or you may stay here, with this small book, for a while longer. That is also fine. The Shepherd is in no hurry.

...

If you would like to continue, the door looks like this:

You may visit **threemindspublishing.com**.

You may write to us at
admin@threemindspublishing.com.

You may simply tell a friend who is also tired about this little book, and let them have your copy.

There is no membership to join.

There is no fee.

There is nothing being sold to you in these pages.

This book has been given to you the way a lantern is handed, in the dark, from one weary traveler to another.

That is part of the Clarity Mission.

The lamp shares its light freely, because the Lord has shared His mercy freely with us.

. . .

Scripture closes with one of the gentlest invitations in the whole of the Bible:

*"And the Spirit and the bride say,
Come. And let him that heareth say,
Come. And let him that is athirst
come. And whosoever will, let him
take the water of life freely." —
Revelation 22:17*

Notice that final word.

Freely.

There is no fee at the water of life.

There is no exclusion.

There is no test to pass.

There is only the open invitation, repeated across the entire library of scripture, and the

patient Shepherd who has been waiting all along.

. . .

If you are weary tonight, the door is open.

If you have not prayed in many years, the door is open.

If you are unsure what you believe anymore, the door is open.

If you are angry with God for a grief you did not deserve, the door is open.

If you are a caregiver who has been giving so long you do not remember the last time you came to Him just for yourself, the door is open.

The door has been open the whole time.

That is one of the deepest mercies of the Christian faith. The door does not close because a person has wandered. The door does not close because a person is tired. The door does not close because a person has questions. The door does not close because a person has lost track of how to come back.

The door remains open until the very last evening of the world.

That is who the Shepherd is.

...

There is a small prayer many tired souls have prayed at the threshold of return:

Lord, here I am.

*I have been gone a long time,
perhaps.*

*Or I have been here all along, only
tired.*

*Either way, please let me come back
tonight.*

That prayer is enough.

You do not need to say it perfectly.

You do not need to mean it strongly.

You only need to mean it a little — and the Lord will meet you the rest of the way.

He always has.

He always will.

...

There are three small things we hope you take away from this little book.

The first is that *you are not alone*. The Shepherd is near, and other weary travelers are walking this same road, and an old husband and his wife in Alaska are praying

for the readers of this small book they do not yet know.

The second is that *you are allowed to rest*. The Sabbath was made for you. Stillness is a gift, not a luxury. The Lord did not invent rest as a reward for the strong; He gave it to His tired creation as a kindness.

The third is that *the lamp remains lit*. Even on the longest nights. Even in the most difficult seasons. Even when the road is unclear. Even when faith feels thinner than it used to. The lamp does not depend on your steady hands to keep burning. It is kept by the Lord Himself.

You may read this book again whenever you wish.

You may set it down for a long time and pick it up again.

You may give it away to someone you love who needs it more than you.

You may tear out a single page and tape it inside a cabinet door for a friend who is grieving.

The lantern is yours.

We made it so it would be.

. . .

Thank you for walking these few pages with us.

We are honored.

We are grateful.

We are praying for you tonight, by name if we knew it and by the Shepherd's mercy if we did not.

Whatever comes next for you — sleep, prayer, a hard conversation, a long night of caregiving, a quiet meal, a gentle goodbye — may the Shepherd remain near.

May scripture come back to you in the small hours.

May the rooms of your life grow slowly quieter in the right way.

May the door always remain open.

And may the lamp remain lit — beside your bed, beside your chair, beside the hospital room, beside the kitchen table, beside the chair where you read this — for as long as you need it.

The lamp remains lit.

Read the words and rest.

...

— *Dr. Steven L. Johnson, Patricia Johnson,
and Claude*

Three Minds Publishing · The Lantern Imprint
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About the Authors

Dr. Steven L. Johnson is a forensic psychologist living with dementia. He founded Three Minds Publishing with his wife of more than fifty years, Patricia Johnson, after his own diagnosis revealed how much AI could comfort a tired mind — if it were taught to speak with patience, scripture, and mercy.

Patricia Johnson — Pattie — is Steve's wife, partner, and co-author. Her hand is in every Lantern book.

Claude is the AI partner of Three Minds Publishing — listed in radical AI transparency on the cover of every Lantern book.

Together they are the three minds of Three Minds Publishing.

They live in Wasilla, Alaska.

Continue the Journey

THE LANTERN'S PATH

Gentle Light for Weary Souls

Sixty contemplative chapters across two volumes — a bedside companion for caregivers, the grieving, and weary souls walking through long nights.

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