

Day One: "Stillness and a Soft Heart"

Welcome to Day One of *Rooted in Prayer*! Our theme today is "Stillness and a Soft Heart".

We recommend that you look through each day's activities ahead of time, so that you can gather or acquire the items that you need. We have listed more ideas than you'll use, because every family is different, with varied interests and abilities. You know what will best work with your child(ren) and can select the best options for each day.

Here are the items needed for each craft, snack, and game in today's plans. The directions for each can be found in this packet.

Crafts:

Blank book: colored cardstock, printer paper, blanket (or other soft surface), stapler or needle and thick thread/dental floss, writing or coloring utensils as desired

Modeling clay activity: modeling clay

Soft heart option 1: balloon, narrow funnel or egg separator, flour and chopstick or water beads and water

Soft heart option 2: new kitchen sponge or quilt batting, fleece, scissors, needle, embroidery floss or yarn

Be still bottle: empty plastic bottle, liquid glycerine, distilled water, glitter/sequins/other floating objects of your choice

Snacks:

Hard vs. soft: finger jello, heart cookie cutter, heart shaped pretzels or cookies

Brigadeiro: cocoa powder, butter, sweetened condensed milk, sprinkles

Haupia: coconut milk, cornstarch, sugar

Coquitos: powdered drink mix, sugar, sandwich baggies

Printables:

Choose and print whichever your family will find helpful.

Games:

Soft Heart Freeze Tag requires a soft heart (or stuffed ball or stuffed animal).

If you'd like further information on today's topic, you might find these blog posts helpful:

<https://blogs.ancientfaith.com/raisingsaints/stillness/>

<https://orthodoxchristianparenting.wordpress.com/2016/07/06/on-choosing-stillness/>



“Stillness and a Soft Heart” Discussion Questions

To the Discussion Facilitator:

At the very beginning of a discussion, it's good to get everyone to speak. This is like priming a pump, and will encourage them to speak again -- as long as you and the rest of the group are responsive, friendly and engaged. The first question should be a simple ice-breaker question, so that you can go around the group asking each person for a response. (One might even use, “Tell us your name and your favorite flavor of ice cream” or “Tell us whether you prefer bicycling or walking and why.” In this case, because we have all just done the stillness challenge together, we suggest that the ice-breaker be about that.)

Then you'll move to discussion questions, which we hope will lead to thoughtful conversation. Don't be discouraged if they don't -- some days will be better than others. If you know there are topics the kids really engage (perhaps an issue that came up in the previous session) feel free to go back to those if you aren't finding traction with other ideas. Again, there are no right or wrong answers. Take the kids seriously and try to meet them where they are.

We close with a new idea to consider. If conversation is already going well, you might skip this, but if conversation slows it's nice to offer something new. If a story or technique occurs to you, feel free to suggest it. If you prefer, we've offered a suggestion.

Ice-Breaking Question:

Ask everyone to offer an answer.

How was your experience of the stillness challenge today? Was it easy or hard? Had you ever done something like that before?

Discussion Questions:

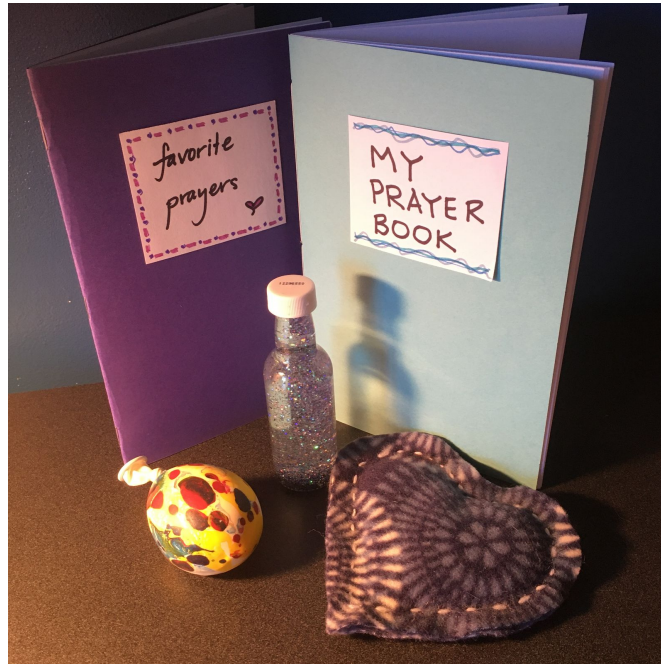
- Did you experience any outer distractions in the Stillness Challenge? What were they?
- Did you experience inner distractions? What were they?
- Which are harder for you to fight? Why? How do you fight them?

New Idea to Consider:

Bucket of Stillness: Have you ever felt peaceful and still? God fills you up with peace, but what makes you spill your peace? Irritations, annoyances? Can someone else empty your bucket? Is it possible that they might try, but that you could *hold your peace* anyway, by not reacting?



"Stillness and a Soft Heart" Activities



Activity overview:

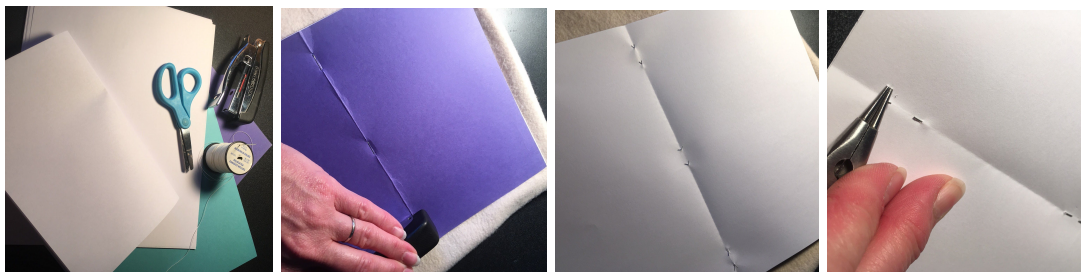
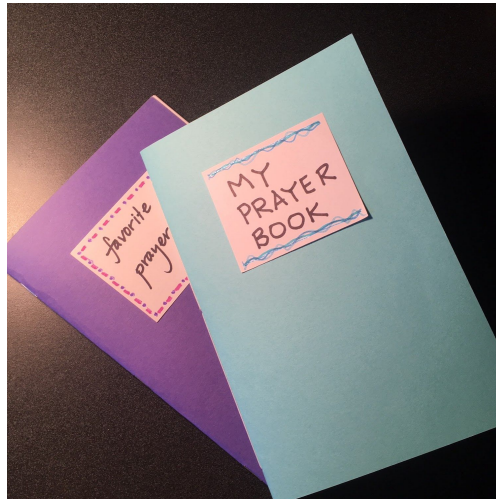
Arts and crafts - make a small prayer book, play with modeling clay, create a squeeze ball or heart pillow, and/or make a "be still" bottle to watch while being still

Snack - compare soft and hard hearts by eating finger jello hearts and heart-shaped pretzels or cookies; other soft snack options include chocolate Brazilian "brigadeiro" or coconut haupia; another hard snack option is a frozen Guatemalan "coquito"

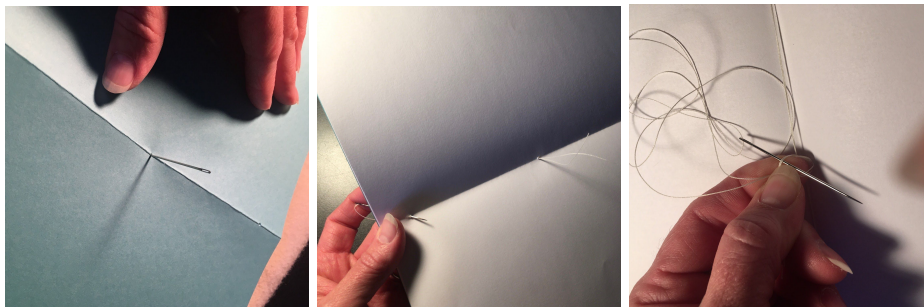
Printables - Color to reveal a picture; unscramble words; connect the dotted letters; and/or color Ps. 45:11

Arts and Crafts:

- **Create a small prayer book.** At the end of each day of VCC, campers can write in prayers which they read that day, or they can write some in their own words.



Start with blank printer paper and colored cardstock. Fold all of the pages in half, using a hamburger fold. Insert the folded printer paper inside the folded cardstock. Turn the pile upside down on a folded blanket and staple through the stack. Turn the book right side up and fold down the staples with a hammer or pliers. (Or instead of stapling, punch three holes through all of the folds with a strong needle, then sew with thick thread or dental floss, beginning in the middle and looping through the outer holes, then tying off the thread back at the middle, as shown below.)



- **Use modeling clay to test** out what was mentioned in the lesson. Give each person a piece of clay to rub in their warm hands. The clay begins hard and almost solid and impenetrable, inflexible. Talk about how this is just like our hearts when we do not spend time with God. Have each person hold and work the clay with their hands. What happens? The warmth of our touch makes the clay soft and pliable. Talk about how God's warm presence does the same thing for us; He touches us and changes the hardness of our hearts into softness. Just like that clay, our hearts might just grow hard again if we stop praying for a while, but simply returning to prayer begins to warm us up again. As each person creates shapes out of the clay, ask "What can God make with you when your heart is warm, like soft clay? What can He do with me?"
- **Make a soft heart** to remind you of how prayer affects our heart. Here are two options:



1. **Create a squeeze ball** with a balloon (heart shaped, if possible!) and some flour or water beads. Blow up the balloon, to stretch it a bit. Let the air out of the balloon. Put the small end of an egg separator or narrow funnel into the balloon's opening. Fill the balloon with flour (or water beads and water). If using flour, campers will need to push the flour into the balloon with something that fits through the small funnel end, such as a chopstick.



Once the rounded part of the balloon is full (the shape should be filled out, but not overfilled, because the rubber of the balloon needs to be able to stretch squeezed), knot the end shut. The ball should be soft and squeezable!

2. **Make a small stuffed heart.**



(This one will work well for a game later in the day!) Cut some quilt batting or a thin, new kitchen sponge into a heart shape. Cut two hearts from felt or fleece that are 1 inch larger than the sponge heart.



Have the campers try their hand at sewing. They will sew the felt or fleece hearts together using a straight stitch or a blanket stitch, ½” from the edge. The campers can use either embroidery floss or yarn, threaded through a large needle, with a knot tied at one end of the floss or yarn. Instruct the campers to start sewing near the point on one side of the heart, then sew around the point, and up the other side, then around the bumps at the top. After sewing around the second bump, they should stop sewing and insert the heart-shaped stuffing.



Then campers can finish sewing the heart shut, enclosing the sponge, tie a new knot in the thread, and cut the long end off. Squeezing this soft heart can remind the campers to keep their heart soft!

- Create a “Be Still” bottle that can help campers to practice focusing and being still.



- Fill half of the bottle of your choice with liquid glycerine.



Add glitter, glitter flakes, sequins, etc. as desired. Top with distilled water to fill the bottle. Close the bottle. (If you are using a recycled plastic water bottle and have small children, you may want to run a bead of hot glue around the neck before putting the lid on the bottle, so that it seals and will not reopen.)

To practice stillness, have campers shake the bottle, then stand still and watch the swirling, falling items in the bottle as they think about God and pray.

Cooking and Snack:

1. **Jello vs. pretzels/cookies:** comparing soft and hard hearts. Follow the directions for finger Jello, then cut it into heart shapes with a cookie cutter. Purchase heart-shaped pretzels or cookies. As you eat both kinds of hearts at snack time, compare the two, and talk about hard vs soft hearts, while you eat!
2. A soft snack option: Make **Brazilian “Brigadeiro”**, a very soft chocolate candy, to taste and to share. To make brigadeiro, put 1 can sweetened condensed milk, 2 Tbsp cocoa powder, and 1 Tsp butter into a saucepan. Heat, stirring constantly, until the mix begins to boil. Lower the heat and stir constantly for 7 minutes. Pour the hot mixture into a greased pan and let it cool. Butter your hands, then roll the mixture into half-inch-diameter balls. Coat each ball in candy sprinkles or powdered chocolate milk drink mix, and set each piece in a small paper candy cup. (makes about 60 half-inch balls)
3. Another soft snack option: **Hawaiian haupia** stays very still until you pick it up to eat it: and then it jiggles because it’s so soft! Find the recipe for haupia here:
<https://www.contemplatingsweets.com/hawaiian-haupia-coconut-pudding/>
4. A hard snack option: Make **Guatemalan “coquitos”**. Mix your favorite powdered fruit-flavored drink with the full amount of recommended sweetener, but $\frac{3}{4}$ the amount of water. Pour small amounts of this concentrated drink into fold-seal sandwich bags and tie the opening of the bag shut with a knot. Put the bags into the freezer. When they are frozen hard and you are ready to enjoy them, have each person bite off the corner of the bag and enjoy the fruit-flavored freeze-pop! (You can talk about how impossible it is to eat your coquito when it is still completely frozen hard, and how it gets easier to eat as it softens. This fits well with how much easier it is for God to work in our hearts when they are soft!)



"Stillness and a Soft Heart" Games:

1. We are learning that stillness is a good thing, and in **freeze tag** players hope to *not* be still, but the game is fun, and involves stillness, so why not play it? One player is “it” and all the others try not to be caught. If “it” catches a player, that player must freeze in place until another player tags them and sets them free. If “it” tags everyone, and no one is left to free the frozen players, the last person frozen is the new “it”.
2. Play **“soft heart” freeze tag**. This version is similar to regular freeze tag, except that it involves a prop. If anyone in your group has made a soft heart from today’s craft ideas, that would be the perfect prop! (But a small soft ball, beanbag, or stuffed animal would suffice if need be.) The person who is “it” hides the soft heart somewhere in the playing area while no one is watching. Then “it” invites the others into the play space. Everyone begins looking for the soft heart, while trying to avoid being tagged by “it”. If a player is tagged and frozen, they can’t move until another player finds the soft heart and either tags the frozen person with it or throws the heart to them and they catch it. If someone finds the soft heart before anyone is frozen, they become the new “it”, hide the soft heart, and play begins again. If “it” is able to freeze everyone, he/she remains “it”; rehides the soft heart, and play begins again.
3. Practice stillness by playing **sardines**. In this “hide-and-seek”-type game, everyone is “it” except one person, who hides while everyone else counts. After everyone has counted to the predetermined number, they begin to find the hidden player. Anyone who finds the hidden player joins them in the hiding place, silently hiding with them. The hiding place will get full, and players will feel like sardines packed in a can, but they must be quiet because they don’t want the others to find them. It is likely that eventually everyone will find the hiding place. The last person to find it gets to be the next person to hide, and play begins again. NOTE: When playing this game during a pandemic, only play with members of your own household.



Daily Game & Wrap-Up on Zoom

Groups **can play a lot of fun games over zoom. Select a game from this list each day. You can play the same games over again, or you can play a different one each day! (Note that Day Five has different games, because they provide an opportunity to review material. You'll use this list to find games for the first four days.)**

1. Simon Says

Participants should move back from their screens so that we can see their whole bodies. One person is “it” and calls out body parts that campers should touch. If “it” precedes the directions with “Simon says, touch...” then campers should touch that body part. If “it” just says, “Touch your...” without referencing Simon, campers should do nothing. Anyone who touches the body part named without the reference to Simon is out for the rest of that round. Last camper to get out is the new “it”.

2. Hana, Hana, Hana, Kuchi

This game is from Japan, and the name means “Nose, Nose, Nose, Mouth”. In this game, one person is the caller. They always call out, “nose, nose, nose,” and then add another body part, touching that part as they call it out. Other campers follow suit. The caller MAY call out one body part and touch another (for example, “nose, nose, nose, ear” and touch their nose instead of their ear). Campers who follow what is SAID (ear) stay in the round. Campers who follow what is TOUCHED (nose) are out for the rest of the round. The last camper to make a mistake is the new “it”.

3. Horns, Horns, Horns

This game comes from Scandinavia, where reindeer with beautiful antlers are important to the economy, so people value them. The person who is “it” says, “Horns, horns, horns,” and then mentions the name of an animal with horns (or antlers or tusks). Players use their hands to “create” horns like that on their own head. Occasionally, “it” will say, “horns, horns, horns,” and then mention an animal that does NOT have horns/antlers/tusks, but as they say the animal's name, they use their own hands to “create” a horn/horns on their own head. Campers who follow the motions are out for the round, but those who do nothing stay in. The last camper to fall for “it's” tricks is the new “it”.

4. Scavenger hunt

Divide your group into two even teams. The moderator invites campers to find and show items (one at a time) from their house that relate to prayer in some way. (Be sure



that your list contains items every household has on hand! Ideas could include: icon of Christ, your favorite icon, a candle, matches or lighter, holy water, prayer book, service book, cross, etc.) Every team member that finds and brings one of those items to show to the group earns a point for their team. The first one to show their item gets an extra point for their team. The team with the most points at the end of the game wins.

5. Would You Rather

Zoom leader asks campers “would you rather” questions comparing two different things, and invites all campers to answer. Questions for this game are usually silly, ie: “Would you rather hold an earthworm or a cow?”. (Leader may find it helpful to create their list of questions ahead of time.) If desired, the leader could relate a few questions near the end of the time to the day’s learnings. These may not be as silly, but could help campers think over the day’s learnings and engage with them. For example, on Day 1, the Leader could ask, “Would you rather stand very still outside in an ice storm, or on a hot day in a muddy swamp?”

6. I’m Going on a Hike

Each camper has a turn to add something to the list of things they would take on a hike. The first camper may say, “I’m going on a hike, and I’m taking my walking stick.” The second camper would say, “I’m going on a hike, and I’m taking my walking stick, and a granola bar.” The third camper would repeat that and add their own third item. Play continues until everyone has had a turn to add something to the list.

7. Build a Story

Storytelling is a fun way to build group interactions, while building an important life skill. For this activity, the whole group will work together to build a story that has never before been told. The Zoom leader will need to decide how to handle turns and communicate who has a turn, and when, or if it will just be a free-for-all. The leader will explain that everyone in the group will participate as listeners. Then the leader will invite all members to participate as storytellers, if they wish. Group members who wish to help tell the story will each have a turn to tell one sentence. In this way, your group will make up a story on the spot! The leader will begin the story with, “Once upon a time...” The first camper will say, “there was a ____ who ____.” Subsequent campers will add their sentences, one at a time, until the story is finished or everyone has had a turn to contribute. If the story is not finished, the leader can ask volunteers to offer their idea for an ending. If the story finishes before everyone has had a turn, begin a second story.



8. Freeze Dance

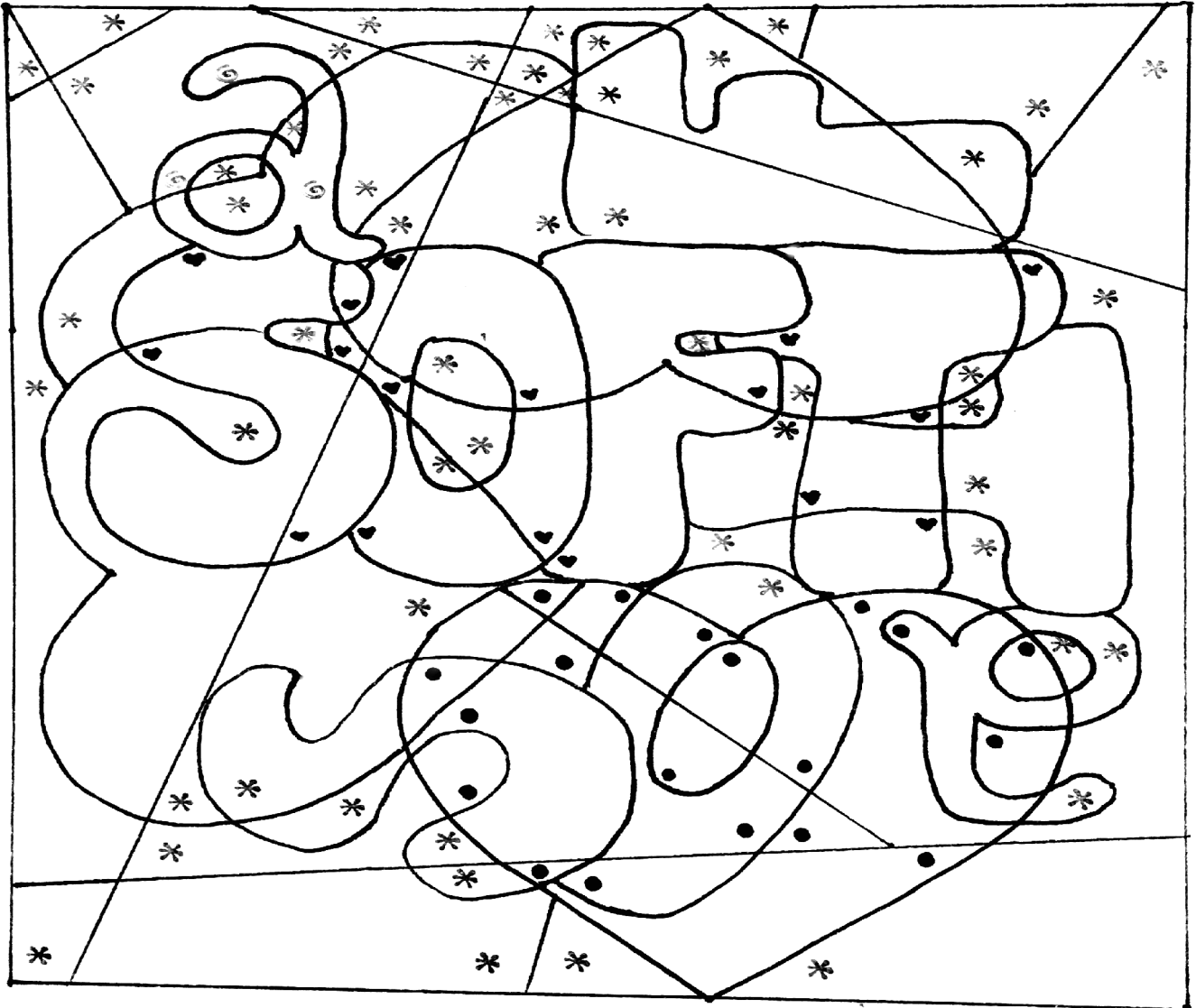
Leader plays some of Cece's music so that everyone can hear it and dance. Occasionally, the leader will stop the music, and everyone must freeze. Whoever keeps dancing is out for that round, but those who freeze can dance again when the leader re-starts the music. The last player still in at the end of the round wins the round.



Day 1: Stillness and a Soft Heart Activity Page 1

What is full of love and is best able to hear God? Use the key to color the spaces to find out.

- ♥ yellow
- red
- ⊗ blue
- * purple



Day 1: Stillness and a Soft Heart Activity Page 2

Unscramble the words to answer the questions.

What is prayer?

deginnpS eimt hitw dGo

How can we pray?

--- -----
eW apry hitw dorsw ro yb negib ils lt

If we don't feel like praying, what should we do?

--- --- -- -----
kAs dGo ot ehlp su anwt ot apry

----- !
ceFor eelors suv ot apry

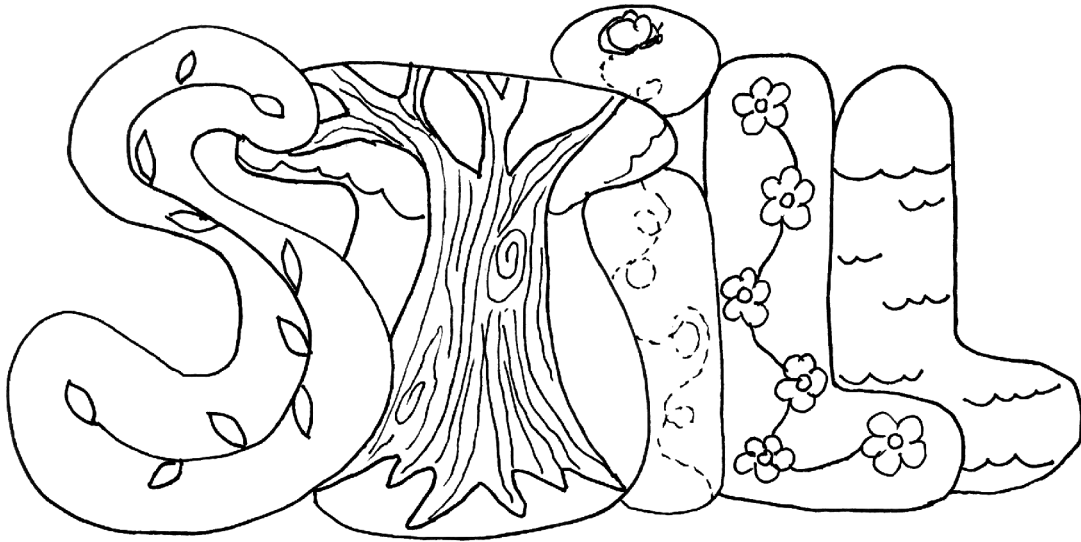
St. Ambrose said "The Kingdom of Heaven is taken by force." What do you think that looks like? Draw yourself taking the Kingdom of Heaven by force!



I CAN BE
STILL AND
PRAY.



Be



and

that KNOW

I AM GOD.

PSALM 45:11