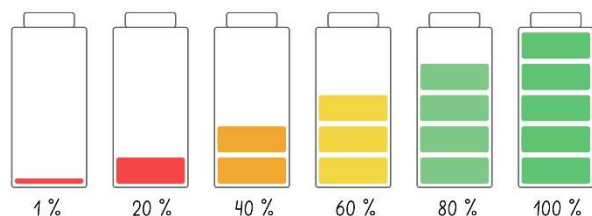


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“Zoey, our culture focuses a lot on doing, but you're tired and trying to regain energy. Will picking up those tasks add or take away your energy?”

“Take away! It’s just one more burden. One more responsibility, I’ll be flat on my face, down in the dirt, feeling like someone’s standing on my back.”

“Ugh, that’s heavy! I think it’s time for you to learn how to rest in being God’s much-loved kid.”

“What’s that mean? How would I do that?”

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The women head to a park with roses. Susan sets up chairs and meanders over to the roses. “Mmm—smell these!”

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“This is great, but why are we here?” asks a puzzled Zoey.

“Well, when we’re worn down, we can do life-giving activities and connect to God in the process. Being out in nature is life-giving.

“Recognizing that who made you—God—also made creation. Seeing the beauty, hearing insects buzz and children laugh, smelling roses—this lets us engage in the world using our five senses. And, of course, tasting coffee! Using our five senses helps us experience creation while having a break from thinking. Does that make sense?”

Zoey ponders Susan’s words for a few minutes. “Yes, it does! Last week, I sat at the coast, hearing the waves, feeling the sand between my toes—I forgot my troubles while I sat, enjoying the sunshine.”

Zoey sips coffee and continues, “But I didn’t think about God. I just enjoyed the experience through my senses.”

“Yes, isn’t it a great break for us to be outdoors! Helps quiet my overactive mind and body when I’m overwhelmed.

“We don’t always need to think about God. We can have a lovely morning, hanging out together and enjoying the park. Nothing wrong with that.

“But notice what happens inside of you with, umm, two different made-up scenarios of two women visiting at a park.

“First scenario: One woman says, ‘Wow, this is really beautiful. I’m so glad God gave me eyes to see this!’ The friend says, ‘Me, too! Isn’t He good to us! And He brought you into my life when I really needed a good friend!’ And the two women sit in silence, enjoying the beauty of creation and God who made it, as well as their life-giving friendship and God who caused their paths to meet.

“Second scenario: One woman says, ‘Wow, it’s really beautiful here. And it’s great to hang out with you today—we don’t get to do this very often.’ The other says, ‘No, we don’t! This is special. How about we thank God for all the good stuff in this moment?’ And the two women thank God for His care, His presence

in their lives, creation, and their friendship. And then they continue visiting until it’s time to go.”

“I like the examples, especially the first one. God brought you into my life when I really needed a good friend!” Zoey’s eyes tear up.

Susan’s expression softens even more as she puts a hand over her own heart and says, “Oh, Zoey, I love being a part of your life!”

Zoey pauses to collect her thoughts. “I think what I am learning is that I can connect to God in ways I haven’t thought about...When we take time to notice God being the one who created everything, it adds depth to our visit.

“And if one of us remembers that God is with us right now, if we say that out loud, the other person benefits from that. Then both of us are reminded that we have a—what are those words you often tell me—a ‘With-God’ life.

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Zoey detours briefly, as she slumps, looks down, and says quietly, “You’re gonna think I’m stupid and I should work harder...I’m really not liking the Bible study I am in...I don’t have the energy. I can’t figure out what they’re talking about. I never get the homework done.

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The women pause to say hi and wave at a mom with little kids. Susan continues, “Hey, what do you think about us ‘orienting to God’ right now?”

“Yes! Can I start? Can I try first? I love this idea because I can go the whole day forgetting to connect with God. And sometimes, I’m shut down and can’t even connect to myself, let alone connect to God. But I think I can do this—what you’ve talked about!” says Zoey.

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“God,” as tears begin trickling down Zoey’s face, “God, you gave me my friend Susan who loves me and encourages me. How could you give me such a beautiful gift when I have lived so badly! And you want me to be with you, which I can hardly even imagine.

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“Amen! What beautiful words and what a beautiful heart you have! That gave me goosebumps!”

A few minutes later, Susan adds, “You know, about Bible studies. Some studies require a lot of effort, and there’s a place for that.

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“That makes sense. I like the idea of me not being stupid!” Zoey looks at her watch. “Oh, gosh, it’s time to go!”

“Yep, it is. Hey, before we leave, I want to know how your connection to God feels now.”

Zoey, with a smile, gives a thumbs-up.

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Sometimes we are told we need to do many things to follow God. The list can be heavy, especially for trauma survivors. But what’s needed most is **to learn to draw near to God**. Zoey discovered one way to draw near is by “Orienting to God.”

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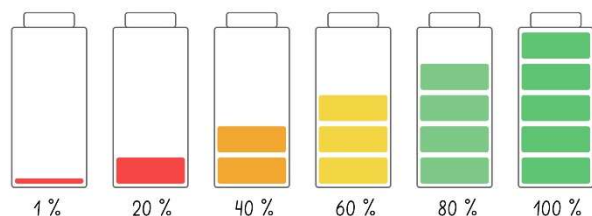
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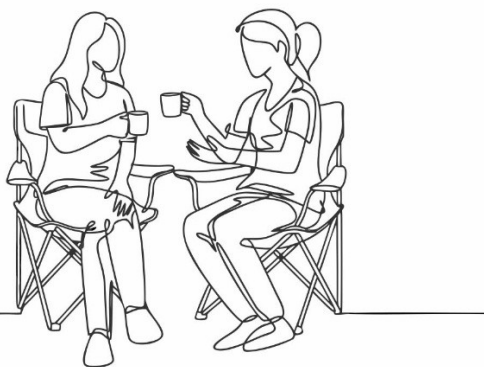
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