

DAY 1

A Quiet Sanctuary

*Search for the LORD and for his strength;
continually seek him.*

1 CHRONICLES 16:11

One Sunday afternoon I headed out for a walk through a nearby forest preserve. As I started out on the limestone trail that circles the lake, I felt my body relax. My mind and heart, which had been on overdrive all week, felt lighter. In this place of calm, I began to pray silently as I watched prairie grasses bend and sway gently in the breeze. Tiny waves lapped the rocky shore. When I passed an inlet, I stopped to listen to a chorus of birds chirping from a small stand of trees growing along the water's edge.

Suddenly a rumble from above interrupted the symphony. I watched as a plane zoomed overhead, its engines drowning out the birdsong. No sooner had its sound faded than another plane emerged from the clouds, filling the air with a familiar rumble. Just twenty-five miles from Chicago's O'Hare Airport, the forest preserve was clearly in one of its flight paths.

Just minutes before, talking with God had seemed easy as I poured out my concerns and sensed Him bringing

encouraging Scriptures to mind. Now I simply wanted to finish walking the loop around the lake and head home.

When I got to thinking about how my prayer time was cut short that afternoon, I realized it wasn't all that different from my experience when starting the day with prayer. I am easily distracted. If it's not the hum of a plane engine, it's the sudden thought of a phone call I need to return or the memory of an argument with my husband. Worse, if I don't guard my heart, my prayers can devolve into a laundry list of worries.

Like those approaching planes, my anxious thoughts so easily break the calm sanctuary the Spirit longs to establish in me. However, while I can't alter a plane's flight path, Scripture tells me I can redirect my disruptive musings. I can confess and turn my worries over to the Holy Spirit. I can pray Scripture passages that relate to a concern I have for a family member, knowing God will always fulfill His promises.

Christ is still the Good Shepherd who "lets me rest in green meadows" and who "leads me beside peaceful streams" (Psalm 23:2)—even when I'm not in a secluded (or noise-free) forest preserve.

Rest Assured

Heavenly Father, when distractions and noise threaten to drown out Your voice today, draw me close and remind me of Your unfailing promises and love for me.

Rest in Him: 2 Corinthians 1:20-22