

# Finding Peace

By Sydney R

I sat at the edge of the dock, my feet dangling into the water. The frogs croaked as they waited for insects to come near, and the water lapped softly at the bank of the pond. By now, the water lilies were in full bloom, and their sweet fragrance wafted on the gentle breeze. I picked one and rolled it between my fingers, inhaling the smell that I loved so dearly. Birdsong filled my ears as I watched a male cardinal light on a lily pad. He hopped around for a few minutes. Finding a puddle of cool water that had pooled on the lily pad, he puffed up his vibrant red feathers, then, relaxing, he took a sip. After he had satisfied himself, I watched as he twittered and took off, landing on the branch of a nearby tree. As a female cardinal sat on a higher branch, she chirped cheerfully, and the two birds flew off together.

Clouds drifted lazily above, while I watched their rippling reflection on the surface of the water. I tried to calm my racing mind and focus on the beauty of my surroundings, but my thoughts kept coming back to the past few days and how busy we had been. Between school, my brother's baseball games, and my tennis lessons, it felt like we were never home. Today was the first time in two weeks that I was able to come to the pond and just sit, without the stress of finishing homework or getting to a game on time.

I stretched out on the dock. The pair of cardinals had returned, and I watched for a while as they brought materials to build their nest. The afternoon sun warmed my shoulders as I felt my eyes drooping. Before I knew that I had fallen asleep, I awoke. The sun was on its downward descent, and the air was growing cooler. Realizing that I had been napping for over an hour, I rubbed my eyes and stretched, fighting back the urge to fall asleep again. Goosebumps prickled at my skin and I shivered, glancing around at the one acre pond that stretched beyond me. I smiled at the memories that had taken place here over the years. I remembered the many times that my brother and I had launched our canoes and paddled around the pond. Sometimes we fished off the dock for the bass that we stocked regularly. When I was just five years old, I reeled in a fish that weighed six pounds, and I nearly fell into the water while trying to land him. I

had begged my dad to take a picture of me holding the fish, grinning from ear to ear, while struggling to hold it up for the camera. I chuckled at the thought.

Lately, I had been the only one visiting the pond. My brother thought he was too cool to paddle around in a canoe, while my parents were busy with other things. I was okay with that though; I liked having the pond to myself. The pond was like a whole new place, free from the worries of the world beyond.

I wiggled my toes in the chilly water, frightening a school of fish that had come to investigate. A tiny frog hopped up onto the dock beside me. I scooped him up and set him gently on the nearest lily pad. He jumped around on it before leaping into the water and swimming back to dry land. A rustling sound came from behind me, and I turned to see a brown shape bounding towards me. I smiled as the thing wagged his tail and barked happily. My dog curled up beside me with his head on his paws as I stroked his soft fur. The sun disappeared behind the treeline, and I waited as the first colors of the sunset showed through the towering oaks. Beautiful oranges, yellows, and pinks tinted the sky. The sun sank lower on the horizon, and the first glimmer of stars dotted the sky. Shadows deepened around me while I watched the heavens sparkling like a thousand diamonds. I located the big dipper and Orion's belt as I lay staring up at the vast sky. A breeze rippled the surface of the water and gently blew my hair into my face. As I stroked my dog I wished that I could capture this moment. Often had I come, armed with my camera, but the photos never came out the same. They were still beautiful, but it wasn't the same as really witnessing it. I had only the memories that no camera could ever capture, memories of peace, quiet in a busy world, and the beauty of God's creation. That was something that no human could ever recreate.