

Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Faith (CM2)

Silence & Solitude

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Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Faith (CM2)

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Why are we so afraid?

“We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Why are we so afraid?

- Why are most of us so deathly afraid of being alone and quiet?
- Why do we need the constant presence of music and television, of crowds and noise?
- Is it perhaps because we do not trust that God is really with us, that He “will never leave us or forsake us” (Hebrews 13:5), and that we do not trust that He is sufficient to meet our needs?

Silence and Solitude

- The Discipline of Silence is to voluntarily and temporarily refrain from speaking (and perhaps from external noise and distractions as well) so that we might hear God more clearly and grow closer to Him.
- The Discipline of Solitude is to voluntarily and temporarily withdraw to privacy that we might grow closer to God.

“There are times to eliminate the voices of the world in order to hear undistracted the voice of God.”

Donald Whitney

“We must reemphasize, the ‘desert’ or ‘closet’ is the primary place of strength for the beginner, as it was for Christ and for Paul. They show us by their example what we must do. In stark aloneness it is possible to have silence, to be still, to know that Jehovah is indeed God.”

Dallas Willard

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. Psalm 46:10

Reasons for Silence & Solitude

➤ To follow the example of Jesus

- **Matthew 4:1** — “Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted...”
- **Matthew 14:23** — “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone...”
- **Mark 1:35** — “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”
- **Luke 4:42** — “At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place.”

Reasons for Silence & Solitude

➤ To hear God's voice more clearly

The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

1 Kings 19:11-12

➤ To express worship of God

The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.

Habakkuk 2:20

➤ To express faith in God

My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation. ² He only is my rock and my salvation, My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken. Psalm 62:1-2

Reasons for Silence & Solitude

➤ To seek the Lord's salvation

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; ²⁶ it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Lamentations 3:25-26

➤ To be physically and spiritually restored

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

Mark 6:30-31

➤ To regain spiritual perspective

And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time.”

Luke 1:20

Reasons for Silence & Solitude

➤ To seek the will of God

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles

Luke 6:12-13

➤ To learn to control our tongues

My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry... anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

James 1:19; 3:2

The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is even-tempered. ²⁸ Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.

Proverbs 17:27-28

“As sleep and rest are needed each day for the body, so silence and solitude are needed each day for the soul.”

Donald Whitney

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him
Psalm 37:7

Be silent before the Sovereign Lord, for the day of the Lord is near. Zephaniah 1:7

In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength...
Isaiah 30:15

“A true Christian doubtless delights in religious fellowship and Christian conversation, and finds much to affect his heart in it; but he also delights at times to retire from all mankind, to converse with God in solitude. And this also has peculiar advantages for fixing his heart, and engaging his affections. True religion disposes persons to be much alone in solitary places for holy meditation and prayer... to delight in retirement, and secret converse with God.”

Jonathan Edwards

“It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers. The more solitary I am the more affection I have for them.... Solitude and silence teach me to love my brothers for what they are, not for what they say.”

Thomas Merton

“Let him who cannot be alone beware of community.... Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.... Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one whom seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Practicing Silence & Solitude

1. Look for and reclaim moments of silence throughout your day.
2. Develop your daily time of being alone with God, especially as part of Bible study and prayer.
3. Find a quiet place where you can be alone and quiet – at home, at the church or elsewhere – and then plan for regular times of silence and solitude in that place.
4. Ask God to give you peace about being able to talk less, and when it is appropriate. Try to live for an entire day without talking.
5. Consider a longer retreat of silence & solitude – a day, weekend, week or longer – at a retreat center or other place where you can be alone and quiet.