



Silence & Solitude

*Withdrawing from the routines of life
to be still with God.*

What is silence and solitude?

Blaise Pascal once said, “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” While we often feel the pull to slow down and quiet the noise of our inner anxieties, the pace and pushiness of Western culture has formed us into busy creatures for whom that kind of life seems impossible.

Throughout the Scriptures, God tells us to be still and know that He is God. (Psalm 46:10, Exodus 14:14, Psalm 37:7). God is inviting us to do something different. We frequently see Jesus pulling away from the relentless demands of his ministry to spend unhurried time alone with his Heavenly Father.

Silence and solitude are not spiritual luxuries reserved for the introverted- they are essential practices for every disciple of Jesus who desires to bring a transforming presence into their families, networks, and neighborhoods.

Helpful Tools and Tips

CREATING SPACE AND TIME FOR SILENCE AND SOLITUDE:

- Identify a specific place and time where you can be alone and silent. Don't limit this to indoors - get out in nature for a meditative walk, run, or bike!
- Turn off or silence digital devices.
- Begin with a modest goal - ten to fifteen minutes is a great starting point.
- Find a comfortable yet alert physical position.
- Begin the time with short breath prayer phrases that express your openness and desire for God - consider phrases like "Speak Lord your servant is listening" or "Come Holy Spirit" or "Jesus Christ, Son of David, have mercy on me a sinner."
- Notice and name what thoughts, feelings, and desires rise to the surface. Rather than seeing these as distractions, allow them to pass before you and offer them to God. Write down any insights God might be bringing to your attention.
- Close your time in silence with a prayer of gratitude or pray the Lord's prayer

SMALL MOMENTS OF SILENCE AND SOLITUDE:

Integrate silence and solitude into the little moments of conversation or waiting throughout the day. Let someone else talk while you listen & pray silently for them. Capture the minutes in between meetings, school carpooling, or ball games to be reminded that God is present with you working out his purposes in your life.

If your job and family allow for it, take a block of time to practice complete silence in the midst of your normal, everyday routines. Let those closest to you know in advance and return their texts/emails/calls after your time is up.

PRACTICES

Practice #1 - LECTIO DIVINA:

For the first 1,500 years of church history, lectio divina (Latin for “divine reading”) was the primary spiritual practice people used to be with Jesus. Since most people were illiterate, the reading of Scripture in the church Gathering each week was vital for spiritual growth with a focus on being attentive and listening to God’s Word.

With that in mind, lectio divina is not an exercise in primarily in mentally critiquing or exegeting a text for the sake of pulling out information, rather, this practice exists to further your relationship with Jesus as He invites you into His presence through His Word.

Relax. This requires a quiet preparation of the heart. Turn off your phone, get away from distraction, slow down, and take a deep breath. We want to unbusy our minds so we can make room to hear the voice of God.

Read (Lectio). Read a Scripture passage slowly. Imagine the original author is speaking it to you. If it’s a narrative, imagine you’re in the narrative watching this story first-hand. Consider paraphrasing the passage in your own words.

- What words caught your attention?
- What phrases stand out to you?

Reflect (Meditatio). Read the Scripture slowly a second time. Reflect on how the passage/words/phrases might apply to your life. What does the passage reveal about people? What does this passage reveal to us about God? Ask the Spirit for wisdom and discernment.

- Is it relevant to something that you are going through?
- Does it bring to mind a struggle that you have been dealing with?
- Do certain people come to mind that God may want you to reach out to or reconcile a relationship with?
- Is there a strong sense of a movement or change that needs to happen?

Respond (Oratio). Read the Scripture a third time. Scripture reminds us that we can approach His presence confidently, so make this conversational with God.

- Where do you need to obey what the passage is telling?
- Where are you resistant or want to push back?
- What do you need to pray for?

The aim of our response is obedience. If the passage prompts you about a poor relationship, go seek reconciliation. If the passage reminds you to be thankful about

something specific in your life, then respond in thankfulness. If you're anxious/overwhelmed about something in your life, present it to the Lord. If the passage prompts a specific sin in your life, confess that sin to God knowing He is faithful and just to forgive you.

Rest (Contemplatio). After reading, rest and wait in His presence. Allow some time for His Word to sink into your soul. Before you're done with this practice, you might want to consider writing down what the Lord showed you as a reminder throughout the day.

It's important to remember the aim of this practice is to just "be" with God. We're not trying to "get something out of it" so much as we want to simply sit in His presence. Like other practices, this will seem challenging at first. Stick with it. Eventually, this will get easier as you commit to tending to this practice regularly.

Practice #2 - JOURNALING:

Journaling is a means of consciously reflecting on the Word and work of God in our midst. This act of reflection has been a practice of followers of Jesus in one form or another throughout history to slow down and examine our thought life, to center ourselves on the presence of God and His Word, to better focus on our prayers (since it's easy to get distracted praying silently or out loud), and to keep a record over time to look at where God has been faithful.

And while there's no one right way to go about it, we would strongly recommend beginning with Scripture so as to allow God's voice to take priority over our own. From there, use Scripture as a launching pad to journal. The point is not so much in the method or approach - rather through journaling, the point is to get ourselves in a place where we are experiencing God's love for us afresh as we approach Him in His Word and in prayer.

The following prompts are ways to get you started, after reading Scripture:

- Paraphrase the passage in your own words.
- Study the passage on your own - What does the passage reveal about God and/or people? What is the passage calling you to do/pray for?
- Write out your prayers, focusing on particular truths you need to be reminded of.
- Recount where you have seen God's faithfulness recently - How have you seen Him at work?
- Process your thought life - What are you wrestling with and what does God's Word say in light of that?

Practice #3 - SILENCE:

The thought of sitting in silence may seem a bit intimidating at first glance, or at minimum, uncomfortable. We have to remember the payoff: *Spending intentional time being silent and alone with God will allow me to be more present in conversations and relationships with others.*

Create Space.

- Identify a specific place and time where you can be alone and silent. Don't limit this to indoors - get out in nature for a meditative walk, run, or bike!
- Turn off or silence digital devices
- Begin with a modest goal - ten to fifteen minutes is a great starting point
- Find a comfortable yet alert physical position

Be Intentional.

- Begin the time with short breath prayer phrases that express your openness and desire for God - consider phrases like "Speak Lord your servant is listening" or "Come Holy Spirit" or "Jesus Christ, Son of David, have mercy on me a sinner."
- Notice and name what thoughts, feelings, and desires rise to the surface. Rather than seeing these as distractions, allow them to pass before you and offer them to God. Write down any insights God might be bringing to your attention.
- Close your time in silence with a prayer of gratitude or pray the Lord's prayer
- Integrate silence and solitude into the little moments of conversation or waiting throughout the day. Let someone else talk while you listen & pray silently for them. Capture the minutes in between meetings, school carpooling, or ball games to be reminded that God is present with you working out his purposes in your life.
- If your job and family allow for it, take a block of time to practice complete silence in the midst of your normal, everyday routines. Let those closest to you know in advance and return their texts/emails/calls after your time is up.

RESOURCES

The following are recommended resources if you would like to journey further into reading the Bible:

- [*Recapturing the Wonder*](#) by Mike Cospers
- [*Liturgy of the Ordinary*](#) by Tish Harrison Warren