

IGNITE INSTITUTE | HOW TO GROW

CLASS 10: SILENCE & SOLITUDE

*More than any generation in history we must discipline ourselves
to enjoy the blessings of silence and solitude.⁴⁵*

Donald S. Whitney

INTRODUCTION

Silence and solitude are considered disciplines of abstinence. These are ways of denying ourselves something we want or need in order to make space to focus on and connect with God.

1. Silence is the spiritual discipline of voluntary and temporary abstention from speaking so that certain spiritual goals might be sought.
2. Solitude is the spiritual discipline of voluntarily and temporarily withdrawing to privacy for spiritual purposes.
3. Silence and solitude are complementary disciplines to fellowship.
4. Silence and solitude are blessings to be enjoyed.

Whether you really enjoy time alone or love being around people constantly, there needs to be a balance. There is a place for fellowship in the life of a believer, and there is a place for silence and solitude.

“Solitude is a kind of companion to fellowship, a fasting from other people, to make our return to them all the better. And silence is fasting from noise and talk, to improve our listening and speaking.”⁴⁶ (David Mathis)

Exercise: Think about your day yesterday, from the moment you woke up to the moment you went to bed. Did you experience any silence or solitude? What about on a typical day?

WHY PRACTICE SILENCE & SOLITUDE?

1. To be More like Jesus

Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. (Matthew 14:13)

And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone... (Matthew 14:23)

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. (Luke 5:15-16)

⁴⁵ Whitney, Donald S. (2014). *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress), 226.

⁴⁶ Mathis, David (2016). *Habits of Grace, Enjoying Jesus through Spiritual Disciplines*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 140.

2. To Express Worship to God

There are times to simply behold and adore God in awe-filled silence.

But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him. (Habakkuk 2:20)

3. To Focus in Prayer

It isn't required to find silence and solitude every single time you pray, otherwise you would rarely pray at all! But sometimes it's helpful to quiet all other distractions and noises so we can hear God's voice more clearly.

And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. (1 Kings 19:8)

4. To Demonstrate Faith

Quiet abstinence of fear and anxiety expresses trust in the Lord.

For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength." (Isaiah 30:15)

5. To Seek Salvation

An unbeliever can seek salvation of the Lord during silence and solitude and a believer can seek salvation from certain circumstances.

The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him... (Lamentations 3:25-28)

6. To be Refreshed

Silence and solitude offer physical and spiritual rest and restoration.

The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. (Mark 6:30-31)

7. To get Perspective

Closing our mouths and getting alone with the Lord can help open our eyes to see things with a Godly perspective.

And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time. (Luke 1:20)

8. To Seek the Will of God

Pursuing God in silence and solitude can help us to discern his will.

In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: (Luke 6:12-13)

9. To Tame your Tongue

Silence helps us learn to control our tongue and to love others better with our words.

Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger... If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. (James 1:19, 26)

SABBATH SIDENOTE

Observing the Sabbath is also a discipline of abstinence – abstaining from work. However, remembering the Sabbath is much more than a discipline, it's a command. God gives it as a gift, but he commands his people to receive it. Rest should be a normal rhythm of your life. (Exodus 20:8-11, Numbers 15:32-36, Deuteronomy 5:15, Mark 2:27)

→ Observing the Sabbath includes...

- Ceasing from work, accomplishment, anxiety, possessiveness, and trying to be God
- Resting spiritually, physically, emotionally, and intellectually
- Embracing God's kingdom and his purposes
- Feasting on our present and future hope in Christ

The Sabbath includes moments of silence and solitude but it also includes times of fellowship with other believers in corporate study of the Scriptures and corporate worship. It includes recreation and spiritual recalibration.

HOW TO GROW

How can we grow in the disciplines of silence & solitude?

1. Make the Choice

Silence and solitude will not just happen to you... you need to decide to pursue them. Take advantage of moments throughout your day, but also plan these times into your schedule.

2. Find a Place

Locate a special place to seek silence and solitude, whether it be an empty room or somewhere outdoors.

3. Leave your Phone Behind

You cannot quiet your mind without detaching from the world of technology.

4. Pray & Meditate

Ask the Lord to reveal your blind spots or anywhere that needs refocusing. Read and meditate on the Bible.

5. Listen

Your capacity to hear God's voice will grow in moments of silence and solitude. Spend time sitting at his feet and listening. However, "Don't assume the voices in your head are God's, assume they are yours. To hear God, take up the Scriptures."