

SERMON NOTES

Sunday, March 16th, 2025

Rhythms: Spiritual Training for Everyday Life Silence & Solitude

All of us have had painful experiences that we could call 'core memories' that have shaped us.

Things like

- Neglect
- Abuse
- Ridicule
- A childhood medical diagnosis
- The early death of a loved one

These memories cause often us to have questions imprinted on our hearts:

- Where was God when that happened to me?
- Does God even care about me?
- Can I depend on God?
- Why did God make me this way?

These doubts imprinted on our hearts from past trauma and pain cause many of us to be apprehensive to be alone with God.

- It is easier to be busy FOR GOD
- It is easier to DO THINGS for God
- It is easier to Sing TO God



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His purpose was for the nations to **seek** after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him - though **he is not far** from any one of us. For in him we live and move and exist. Acts 17:27-28

The God who is always near us wants us to seek Him!

For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Luke 11:10

Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was **the sound of a gentle whisper**.

1 Kings 19:11-12 (NLT)

"a still small voice" (RSV & KJV)
"a sound of a gentle blowing" (AMP)
"a sound of sheer silence" (NRSV)

What if the voice of God is found in the sound of sheer silence?

Maybe the constant noise around us was all working together to drown out the voice of the God who is near us??

QUESTION: What do we call a moment that is silent beyond our level of comfort?

ANSWER: An Awkward Silence

The practice of Silence & Solitude

- Is not an easy practice
- Has been practiced by believers in Jesus for thousands of years
- Jesus regularly practiced silence & solitude



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“We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence” Mother Teresa

“The invitation to silence & solitude is just that. It is an invitation to enter more deeply into the intimacy of relationship with the One who waits just outside the noise and busyness of our lives. It is an invitation to communication and communion with the One who is always present even when our awareness has been dulled by distraction. It is an invitation to the adventure of spiritual transformation in the deepest places of our being, an adventure that will result in greater freedom and authenticity and surrender to God than we have yet experienced.” Ruth Haley Barton

Jesus practiced Silence & Solitude:

- Late into the evening
 - After sending them home, he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell while he was there alone. Matthew 14:23
- Early mornings
 - Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray. Mark 1:35
- All night
 - One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. Luke 6:12
- Frequently
 - Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. Luke 5:16



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Spiritual Practices

- Prayer
- Bible study
- Fasting
- Sabbath
- Worship
- Generosity
- Secrecy
- Outreach
- Silence / Solitude

Many Christians do spiritual practices out of duty to prove their maturity

Spiritual practices are the means by which we give the Holy Spirit authority to FORM OUR SOULS into the character of Jesus

- They are not a sign of maturity
- They are a means toward maturity in Christ

“Solitude is not a private, therapeutic place... It is a place of encounter.”

Henri Nouwen



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SUGGESTED TRAINING PLAN

REMEMBER

- **START SLOW** - Start small and lengthen over time
 - **STAY CONSISTENT** - you can't go to the gym once a month and expect to see results
1. Find a quiet place (at a time when your home is quiet)
 - a. Sit in a comfortable chair
 - b. Make sure your phone is away (another room)
 2. Start with a few deep breaths
 3. Pray a simple prayer like:
 - a. Good morning Jesus
 - b. Holy spirit come
 4. When your mind begins to wander (it will) try repeating your simple prayer
 - a. Show yourself grace
 - b. Be patient
 5. Sit for a time in God's love
 - a. Don't try to force anything to happen
 - b. Just be with God
 6. After a few minutes (3-4) begin to pray in response to what the moment felt like
 - a. Consider reading a Psalm
 - b. Pray for your upcoming day
 - c. Pray over your family
 - d. Close with a prayer of gratitude
 7. Throughout your day look for small opportunities to sit in silence
 - a. Over your lunch break
 - b. While the kids are napping
 - c. Take a walk in the afternoon



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Questions for thought and discussion:

1. What are some core memories from your own life that have shaped your personality and view of the world? Share them with someone if you are willing.
2. Have you ever wrestled with core doubts about God? How have those doubts influenced your spiritual journey?
3. In what ways do you find it easier to be busy for God rather than being alone with Him?
4. What is your internal attitude toward silence? Do you seek it out or avoid it? Why?
5. The story of Elijah highlights how God's voice was found in the "gentle whisper" or even "sheer silence." How might God be trying to speak to you in silence?
6. What fears or apprehensions, if any, do you have about sitting in silence with God?
7. Have you ever experienced a moment where you felt particularly close to God in stillness? What was that like?
8. If you were to commit to a short time of silence and solitude each day, what do you hope God might reveal or do in your life through that practice?



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Helpful resources on Silence & Solitude

[“Invitation to Silence & Solitude”](#) by Ruth Haley Barton

Run a practice of [Solitude](#) from Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer

Podcast - [“An introduction to Solitude”](#) by Practicing the Way



