

Practice of Silence

- that we might experience life in all its fullness -
- and become more Christlike -



Mark 1:32-39
Ecclesiastes 3:7
Ecclesiastes 5:1-7

Luke 5:16; Matthew 14:13, 23; Mark 6: 30-32
James 3:1-12
Proverbs 25:11

Solitude and silence go hand in hand. But they are more than a space or a retreat (which may have value in themselves...). Silence and Solitude are a state of heart. Once practised they can be outworked in the midst of life – living our lives from a quiet inner centre/stillness.

Silence and God

- ✳ “Some persons, when they hear the “prayer of quiet”, falsely imagine the soul remains stupid, dead, and inactive. But unquestionably it acteth therein, more nobly and more extensively than it had ever done before, for God Himself is the Mover and the soul now acteth by the agency of His Spirit... Instead, then, of promoting idleness, we promote the highest activity, by inculcating a total dependence on the Spirit of God as our moving principle, for in Him we live and move and have our being... Our activity should therefore consist in endeavouring to acquire and maintain such a state as may be most susceptible to divine impression, most flexible to all the operations of the Eternal Word. Whilst a tablet is unsteady, the painter is unable to delineate a true copy: so every act of our own selfish and proper spirit is productive of false and erroneous lineaments., it interrupts the work and defeats the design of the Artist.” *Mme Jeanne Guyon (17th century catholic mystic)*
- ✳ “Settle yourself in solitude and you will come upon Him in yourself.” Teresa of Avila
- ✳ The extent to which people go to avoid self confrontation is awesome. Work and leisure are the most common dodges, being busy even with church or God-related things. It can still be a way of hiding like Adam among the trees of the garden and escaping the voice and the presence of the Lord God. Fortunately our God is more willing to seek than we are to be found.

Silence and life

- ✳ “The post-modern person is addicted to haste, hurry, hustle. And the addiction shrivels our soul. Our desperate need today is for a *time-full* life. When we are fractured and fragmented with “muchness” and “manyness” we cannot experience a time-full life. When we chaff under the “slowness” of our microwaves and our computers it becomes nearly impossible for us to obey the divine whisper, “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps. 46:10). Some things simply will not yield to our perpetual hankering for the instant, the immediate, the sudden. Surely the growth of our soul before God is one of those things. Time . . . time and space . . . time and space and stillness . . . these are the tools God uses to build a patient endurance within us. One of the most repeated counsels given in Scripture is the simple admonition to “Wait upon the Lord.” But we will never even see this as a good thing until we enter a time-full life.”
- ✳ “There is a solitude of heart that can be maintained at all times. Crowds, or the lack of them, have little to do with this inner attentiveness.”

Silence with others

- * “Under the practice of silence & solitude we learn when to speak and when to refrain from speaking”
- * Silence sometimes involves the absence of speech, it always involves the act of listening.
- * Offering someone silence can give them space to speak out themselves.
- * One of the fruits of silence is the freedom to let God be our justifier. We don’t need to straighten others out. We can trust God with our reputation. Being set free in order that we are able to hold our tongues.

Solitude and community

- * Solitude is different to loneliness. When we are lonely we reach out to other people to fill the void of our lives, and we cling to them to meet needs in ourselves. If there are not people willing to do this for us, we may escape into busyness to avoid the further conversion of our souls. Solitude, in contrast, is different from loneliness. It is intentional isolation from others and planned availability to God. When we are lonely we know we are alone. Solitude, in contrast, is the experience of silence in which we discover we are not alone.
- * “In solitude we can come to the realization that we are not driven together but brought together. In solitude we can come to know our fellow human beings not as partners who can satisfy our deepest needs, but as brothers and sisters with whom we are called to give visibility to God’s all embracing love. In solitude we discover that community is not a common ideology, but a response to a common call. In solitude we indeed realize that community is not made but given.” (*Henri Nouwen*)

Absence of noise... alone... listening... retreat... stillness... respectful... freedom from busyness... without activity... just being... being with... thinking... thinking before speaking... awareness... allowing room... still your heart... allow His presence... in the busyness act out of the stillness within... being available... learning when to speak and when not to... deliberate helplessness to God... speaking well...

Practical things to try or think about

- * Discipleship is a systematic intentional rearranging of life and living in order to be more like Jesus. Some things you may have to try before you appreciate them or the ways God may use them. Others may instantly be appealing...
1. Stop now and plan a time tomorrow when you can practise silence.
 2. Reflect on how willing are you to be found by God? When?
 3. Practice stilling yourself before God – choose music, a verse, art or maybe candles help you do this.
 4. Plan a retreat day/morning/hour
 5. Take advantage of the small solitudes within your day. E.g. traffic jams / showering / eating breakfast. Seek quiet when you might normally add noise like the radio.
 6. Think about how you feel about spending some time alone? Recognise your feelings and ask for God’s help with those that are negative and might hinder you coming to him...
Try deliberately seeking time alone.
 7. Read about the Carthusian monks on the internet and seek inspiration from their example to us <http://www.chartreux.org/index.php>
 8. Limit your speech to a minimum for a day and deliberately notice how words bless/encourage or wound/destroy. Then think about when you speak and why.