

Session #6: Quietening of the Noisy Soul - Part 2

Watch!

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/WFjq8pE-vH8>

Review!

Scripture Focus: Psalm 62

My Soul Waits for God Alone

To the choirmaster: according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

1 For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.

2 He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

3 How long will all of you attack a man
to batter him,
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?

4 They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.
They take pleasure in falsehood.

They bless with their mouths,
but inwardly they curse. Selah

5 For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.

6 He only is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

7 On God rests my salvation and my glory;
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

8 Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah

9 Those of low estate are but a breath;
those of high estate are a delusion;
in the balances they go up;
they are together lighter than a breath.

10 Put no trust in extortion;
set no vain hopes on robbery;
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

11 Once God has spoken;
twice have I heard this:
that power belongs to God,
12 and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.
For you will render to a man
according to his work.

Shift #1

“For God alone my soul waits in silence” (v.1)

“For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence” (v.5)

Shift #2

“I shall not be greatly shaken” (v.2)

“I shall not be shaken” (v.6)

The Discipline of Silence is about **abstaining from speaking and shutting out the chatter around us in order to hear God speak.**

The Discipline of Solitude is about **withdrawing from others to be alone so that we can enjoy intimacy with God.**

Study!

The Purpose of Silence and Solitude

A. To Express Faith in God

The simple act of silence before the Lord, as opposed to coming to Him in a wordy fret, can be a demonstration of faith in Him.

5 For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,
for my hope is from him.
6 He only is my *rock* and my *salvation*,
my *fortress*; I shall not be shaken.
7 On God rests my *salvation* and my *glory*;
my mighty *rock*, my *refuge* is God.
8 Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us. Selah
(Psalms 62:5-8, emphasis mine)

“I withdrew to my usual place of retirement in great peace and tranquility; spent about two hours in secret duties and felt much as I did yesterday morning, only weaker and more overcome. I seemed to depend wholly upon my dear Lord, wholly weaned from all other dependences. I knew not what to say to my God, but

only lean on His bosom, as it were, and breathe out my desires after a perfect conformity to Him in all things. Thirsting desires and insatiable longings possessed my soul after perfect holiness. God was so precious to my soul that the world with all its enjoyments was infinitely vile. I had no more value for all the favour of men than pebbles. The Lord was my ALL; and that He overruled all greatly delighted me. I think my faith and dependence upon God scarce ever rose so high. I saw Him such a fountain of goodness that it seemed impossible I should distrust Him again, or be any way anxious about anything that should happen to me."

- David Brainerd (Wednesday, April 28, 1742)

B. To Learn Control of the Tongue

Learning to keep silent for extended periods of time can help us control our tongue.

According to James, the religion of those who cannot control their tongues is worthless (James 1:26). James goes on to say, "For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body" (James 3:2).

11 Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?
13 *Keep your tongue from evil*
and your lips from speaking deceit.
(Psalms 34:11-13, emphasis mine)

For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. (James 3:2)

Life and death are in the power of the tongue. We need to take stock of how and what we speak. Our life can be damaged if we don't learn to control our tongue due to:

1. Rash Promises

22 For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." 23 And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." 24 And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 And the king was exceedingly

sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. (Mark 6:22-26)

2. Reckless Words

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing. (Proverbs 12:18)

3. Rumour Mongering

20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
and where there is no whisperer, *quarreling ceases*.
21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
(Proverbs 26:20-22, emphasis mine)

“Great minds discuss ideas.
Mediocre minds discuss events.
Small minds discuss other people.”
- Eleanor Roosevelt

The Practice of Silence and Solitude

The practice of silence and solitude brings us to the place where we don't seek security and strength in frantic activities but rather, in quietness and trust. When we learn to create an inner chamber of quietness in our soul, we will live out of a divine centre.

“We mutter and sputter.
We fume and we spurt.
We mumble and grumble;
Our feelings get hurt.
We can't understand things;
Our vision grows dim,
When all that we need
Is a moment with him.”
- Earl D. Radmacher

1. Carve Out Margins

Schedule your quiet time in your calendar. Keep to it! To schedule time for spiritual growth and formation:

1. Throughout the day— take a few minutes now and then to be strengthened and refreshed.
2. Every day—spend one hour in God's presence for spiritual health.
3. Every week—set aside four hours of extended time with God for soul repair.

4. Every month—plan a whole day to wait upon God and go through the Scriptures.
5. Every year—schedule two full days to spend in silence and solitude with God.

2. Create Safe Places

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

Find a regular “closet” space. Retreat to that place and pray. John Maxwell, the American pastor and author, has a “thinking chair” in his office that is solely dedicated for thinking and nothing else. Don’t choose the bed as a place for silence and solitude as the tendency is to sleep silently alone. That’s not the point. Choose a space that is conducive to silence and solitude. It can be a modest place. Many have used their commute times, even in public transportation, for silence and solitude. But make it a practice and stick to it.

3. Cultivate a Fixed Routine

Be disciplined. Once we have scheduled our quiet time, we must make it a high priority and stick to it. In the same way that we wouldn’t cancel our meetings with people who are important, we mustn’t neglect or continually make excuses not to meet with the One who is most important.

4. Capture Your Reflections

Learn to capture the reflections we have gleaned from our quiet time in a journal. This is a needed discipline in observing the signature grace and work of God as we journey through life. When we look back at our journals, we will be amazed at the realness, love and grace of God.

Four ways to capture your reflections

1. To Assess My Life
2. To Appreciate My Work
3. To Affirm My Values
4. To Adore My Master

Reflect!

What are some key insights that I can take away from today’s session?

To do silence and solitude consistently, what are some things I can commit to?

Discuss!

Our lives will never transform if we keep just doing a few minutes of “God-time” a day. Why? Because nurturing an awareness of God involves living a devoted life, not just having some devotional time. When we are tutored in the discipline of silence and solitude, we will start to enjoy spending time in God’s presence—the way we would with a friend. As we become

more at ease in His presence, we also find that we don't always have to talk. We can just enjoy His company.

Read Luke 6:12–13 and Mark 1:16–39.

These verses record the busiest day in Jesus' life.

Jesus prayed all night before He chose His first disciples. After He prayed, He chose His disciples, taught in the temple, cast out demons (which is exhausting work), healed a seriously ill woman and ministered at a citywide meeting. He had prayed all night, woken up early in the morning, served and taught throughout the day, and ministered to the entire city at night. Imagine a whole city of people clamouring at His door asking for ministry! He didn't stop. He kept working. It was physically draining.

Despite a long and busy day, and despite praying all night previously, instead of sleeping in, Jesus made it a priority to wake up early the following day for prayer.

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

He woke up before dawn and went to a solitary place to pray. After centring down with the Father, He discerned that His priority was to move on to the next towns. He went to His disciples and said, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out" (Mark 1:38). Despite the demands on Him, Jesus always had time for what God had assigned Him to do. He was never rushed. He lived with a clear sense of priorities based on the purposes of God.

Q1: How does our culture discourage us from being alone? How is the hunger for solitude shown in the people you know, and in society at large?

Q2: What do you think about solitude? Do you welcome it or resist it? How might your past have contributed to your thoughts?

Q3: We need to give ourselves permission to experience solitude. What things (internally or externally) affect your ability to do so?

Q4: How do the opportunities for solitude change through the seasons of your life? What season has given you the most solitude? The least? What about your current stage of life?

Q5: How can your children be given opportunities for solitude?

Q6: Discuss some practical arrangements you need to make to prepare for a time of solitude. Which are the hardest to resolve? What available resources may help you?

Between Sessions

Challenge!

Post-Lesson Activity: Read the questions below and record your reflections in your journal.

1. What changes can I make to have a healthy solitude time?
2. What secret ambitions do I have?
3. Do I know who God has called me to be?
4. What inner barriers stop me from this destiny?
5. What next step do I need to take for my personal development?
6. What would a fruitful spiritual life look like for me?
7. Am I afraid of strong personalities? Why, or why not?
8. What situations make me feel powerless? How can I overcome this?
9. What does my heart tell me to do? Is my mind in agreement? Why, or why not?
10. In what ways does my past impact on how I live in the present?

Memorise!

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

Before next session!

Read the tips below on how to implement our silence and solitude time

1. Prepare

Bring our Bible, journal and pen. If we are outside, we may need walking shoes, a chair, sun protection, jacket or blanket and water. We may need to pack a lunch, some snacks, or choose to fast.

2. Unplug

Set aside a time and space for Jesus where we won't be interrupted by other people, cell phones, e-mails, media or loud noises. We could go to a secluded nature spot or a quiet room. We may need to make arrangements with family members or others to ensure we are not interrupted.

3. Do Nothing

Begin by doing nothing for at least thirty minutes. Just be with Jesus in the silence with no agenda. This will probably be difficult! It may help to take a prayer walk. We are training our bodies and souls to listen to the Lord.

4. Let Go

We may be hoping to have a special time with God, hear a message from Him, or to accomplish something important. We may simply wish to release our desires to the Lord. We may be anxious about our work, a loved one or a personal matter. Place each concern into the Father's hands. Ask Jesus to lead us in this time and then be open to whatever He has for us, trusting that it is good even if it doesn't feel good. We may be refreshed by God; alternatively, distresses may surface. We may be encouraged or challenged. But let go and let God.

5. Rest

What would we enjoy doing with Jesus? He is our best friend and He likes being with us! Set aside any concerns for loved ones or our ministries until the end of the solitude time. Simply pray from our hearts, perhaps meditating on a Psalm or Gospel story. If we're tired, we may need to take a nap. Go ahead. Jesus took naps! This will help us to be refreshed and attentive to God.

6. Re-focus

When we pray, we all struggle with distracting thoughts. Don't feel bad or stressed. When our minds wander, offer the distraction to God or replace it with a prayer. Give thanks and praise God, or meditate on Scripture. It may help us to gently repeat verses from the Bible, possibly breathing the words in and out as a Breath Prayer.

7. Open Up

What's been going on in our lives? How are we feeling? Talk to God about our experiences and needs. We may want to journal our prayers and what God seems to be saying to us.