



# Week 4 | Silence & Solitude

## Exercises

### Exercise 1 - Considering Silence

In our noise-polluted world, it can be very difficult to find, let alone enjoy, times of silence; silence can feel uncomfortable, awkward or unproductive. This discipline invites us to leave behind the world to cultivate a deeper listening life.

Intentionally creating silence in our daily life can bear enormous fruit. Over time, it can help us to quiet our minds from the chaos of life, free us from addictions to noise, develop better listening skills, and, most importantly, help us to be more attentive and discerning to the voice of Jesus.

*“Silence is not to be shunned as empty space, but to be the friended as fertile ground for intimacy with God.” - Susan Muto*

At the end of the day, look back over your day and consider:

**How much silence did you experience today? When did you experience it?**

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**Do you find that you like to fill silences with sound or learning? How do you fill these moments of silence (music, news, podcast)?**



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**Think back on a recent time of silence. How did you feel (renewed, uncomfortable, resistant)? Why did you feel that way?**

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**Do you think God values time with you in silence? Why?**

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**Where in your daily life could you find silence with God?**

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Pray and ask God to show you ways you can incorporate more moments of silence into your daily life. On your commute? Cooking dinner? Not turning on the tv? In the next couple of days, find a task (or several) and turn off any background noise. Continue the task by offering it to God. Be in the present, doing what you're doing with a listening heart.

**What is it like for you? What distracts you in these moments of silence?**

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## Exercise 2 - Here I Am

*“Here’s my heart, Lord. Speak what is true.”*

The practice of silence can be about both finding pockets of silence with God and also intentionally spending longer periods of time in silence with Him. Silence is about quieting the noise around us, but also the noise within us. It is a time to rest in God and trust that being with Him will loosen our rootedness in the world and help us to hear His voice. It is about making a space to prayerfully offer our hearts and minds to God, receiving what He wants to give us.

One way to do this is by offering ourselves to Jesus--relinquishing control and saying that we are available for what He wants for us.

Decide ahead of time how much time you will spend in silence. Set a modest goal; ten minutes is sufficient. If this is a new practice for you, you may want to set a timer. Setting a timer relieves you from having to watch the clock and lets you forget the time and settle into the quiet. Find a comfortable position and take three deep breaths. Become still and silent before the Lord.

Begin with the simple prayer of “Here I am, Lord.” You may find that your mind is able to rest and be quiet. More likely, you may be interrupted with thoughts that bubble up to the surface. As distractions come to mind, let them pass by, imagining they’re boats floating down a river. It’s natural and okay; don’t get frustrated. If a particular thought keeps coming up, take a moment to write it down or purposefully surrender it to God. Gently return to God, repeating “Here I am, Lord.” Rest in the presence of God, in the silence, and in this prayer until your time is up.

### What is this like for you?

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In the future, you may feel led to try increasing the minutes on the timer and increasing your time in prayerful silence.



### Exercise 3 - Solitude

*“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” - Luke 5:16*

*“Solitude, at its most basic and profound level, is simply an opportunity to be ourselves with God.” - Ruth Haley Barton*

When are you most comfortable being yourself--with family or loved ones? At home? What about when you are alone? The practice of solitude involves creating space and time that is set apart for you to be yourself with God. In solitude we can be reminded of our true identity in Christ, an identity that is given in grace, not earned. It is uninterrupted and distraction-free time when we can commune with Jesus--being still or enjoying other disciplines such as prayer, study, or rest.

Pray that God would help you find a time this week to be alone with Him. Based on your availability this week, choose one or both of the following exercises.

- Spend **fifteen minutes** alone with God. You can do an activity if you wish: walk, run, drive. Dedicate the time ahead of you to God by praying and asking for God to make His presence known to you. Recognize that the Lord is near as you continue with your task or simply enjoy being in His presence. After the time is up, consider how it was for you to be alone with God.

**Was it hard? Good? Did God speak to you in anyway?**

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- If you desire or are able, set aside **an hour** or more with God. Find a quiet place where you can be alone with little to no distractions. You might want to bring your Bible, journal, or nothing at all. Take deep breaths to relax and begin by asking God to make His presence known to you during this time of retreat. Spend a few minutes in stillness and silence and then ask God to guide you on how to spend your time. Relax and enjoy this time with Jesus.

