

SILENCE & SOLITUDE



An Invitation to seek Silence & Solitude

It's no secret that in today's culture, we are bombarded with noise. We've become accustomed to it—not just the literal sound, but a more insidious noise that unendingly and unapologetically pushes us to stay connected, stay informed, and stay plugged in. The questions this practice seeks to explore are: plugged into what? Is that a good thing? What is it doing to our relationship with God, each other, and our formation?

Shallow likes, friend requests, entertaining memes, and videos are not inherently evil, but at the pace they are thrown our way, are they good? Is it balanced? Do we have time to build genuine relationships? Do we have time to confront the things going on within us? And do we get to listen to God and what he has for us?

Many of us may feel that God doesn't speak to us. This is a complex, deep question, but perhaps part of it—at least for me—is when am I ever truly listening?

The practice of silence and solitude invites us to adopt a Jesus-led rhythm, making regular time to step away from the noise and distractions, to be still and know that he is God. It's about surrendering control and being intentional about removing distractions. We pray that as you explore this, may you and your community find deep rhythms for this season and beyond.

Online Resources & Community

Practice guides and more info found at:
<https://transformationtrek.online>



Scan the QR code for Some
Trek Discussion Videos



Contact us at
info@transformationtrek.online

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A few key verses

Mark 1:35	1 Kings 19:11-12
Matthew 6:6	Isaiah 30:15
Luke 5:16	Habakkuk 2:20
Exodus 14:14	Lamentations 3:25-28

A key passage for on-going reflection

1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. 7 The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. 9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. 10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." 11 The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Discussion Questions for Small Groups



We will preach on this topic in the first two weeks of July, and then have one-off messages in the final two weeks.

Please use this three week discussion guide in whatever way suits your small group.

Week 1 - Turn it down

Key Verses to Read & Explore Together

1 kings 19: 18-19, Mark 4:19, Luke 5:16

Questions

1. What noises, pressures, worries, and voices in your life can choke out God's voice (Mark 4:19)?
2. How does God's gentle whisper contrast with the noise in Elijah's life (1 Kings 19:9-18)? How can you identify and respond to God's whisper?
3. Does it look like to model your life after Jesus' practice of withdrawing to pray (Luke 5:16)?
4. What practical steps can you take this week to turn down the noise and create space for silence and solitude? How can these changes impact your relationship with God and others?

"Solitude is the furnace of transformation."

Henri Nouwen

Discussion Questions for Small Groups



Week 2 - Seeking Silence

Key Verses to Read & explore together : Mark 1:35, Lamentations 3:25-28, Habakkuk 2:20

Due to the nature of this week's focus on silence, it feels fitting to avoid typical Q&A sessions. Instead, read through the passages, light a candle or do whatever helps create a peaceful environment, and spend some time in quiet, silent prayer for an uncomfortable amount of time, or have an extended period of prayer with long breaks between points, asking God to guide your prayers. Afterward, discuss what you thought, how it made you feel, and how you can incorporate this practice into the coming weeks.

Week 3 - Seeking Solitude

**Key Verses to Read & Explore Together
Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Psalm 46:10**

Read through verses and reflect on your experiences with solitude. Have you practiced it before? Recall times when you were alone. What challenges did you face? Imagine going on a retreat where you spend time alone in silence, meeting only for meals. How would this impact your spiritual journey? Spend time in solitary prayer, then discuss your experiences and thoughts with your community, exploring how solitude can deepen your relationship with God and others.

Practicing Silence & Solitude.

Morning Quiet Time

Start your day with 15-30 minutes of silent prayer or meditation on Scripture. This practice helps you win the morning and sets you up to listen better to the Spirit throughout the day.

How to Practice:

Set a Routine: *Choose a consistent time each morning.*

Create a Peaceful Space: *Find a quiet spot in your home, with a comfortable chair and a small table for a candle or a Bible.*

Prepare Your Heart and Mind: *Take deep breaths to relax. Light a candle or play soft music to help you focus.*

Silent Prayer or Meditation: *Spend the first few minutes in silence, inviting God's presence. Use a simple prayer like "Lord, have mercy," or just be still before God.*

Scripture and Reflection: *Read a short passage of Scripture and meditate on it. Reflect on its meaning and application to your life.*

Conclude with Prayer: *End with a prayer, thanking God for the new day and asking for his Spirit's guidance.*

Benefits:

- *Win the Morning, Win the Day: Start your day with the Spirit of God.*
- *Deepens Your Relationship and/or awareness of God.*
- *Increases Mindfulness: Helps you be more mindful and present, reducing stress and anxiety.*

This practice creates a foundation of peace and spiritual focus, transforming your entire day.

Practicing Silence & Solitude.

Silent Retreats

Attend or plan a retreat focused on extended periods of silence. These can range from a few hours to several days. The goal is finding a rhythm of worship and reverence for God and his voice in your life.

How to Practice:

1. Plan Your Retreat: *Decide on the duration—whether a few hours, a day, or a weekend. Choose a distraction-free location like a retreat centre, quiet park, or a dedicated space at home.*

2. Create a Peaceful Environment: *Set up with comfortable seating, a Bible, a journal, and a candle. Turn off tech and clear away tasks that might distract you.*

3. Set Intentions: *Begin with prayer, asking God to speak to you and help you be open to his voice. Remember, this is an invitation, not a demand.*

4. Structured Silence: *Spend extended periods in silence. Sit quietly, walk in nature, or engage in silent prayer. Use breath prayers like “Speak, Lord, your servant is listening,” if you struggle to calm your mind.*

5. Scripture and Reflection: *Read and meditate on Scripture. Reflect on its significance in your life. (Suggested verses and questions follow.)*

6. Journaling: *Write down thoughts, prayers, or insights. This helps process what God is speaking to you.*

Conclude with Prayer: *End with prayer, thanking God for his presence and asking for His continued guidance.*

Remember, the goal of a silent retreat is not about strict rules but cultivating a disciplined rhythm of worship and reverence. It’s about creating space to hear God’s voice more clearly and allowing his presence to transform your life not for just a couple of hours but your entire life.

Practicing Silence & Solitude.

Verses & Questions for a Silent Retreat or general reflection

Any part of the Bible could be helpful, but focusing on Jesus and his stories can be powerful. Here are a few suggestions.

Matthew 4:1-11, Matthew 5:1-12, Matthew 11:28-30, Matthew 14:22-23, Mark 1:35, Mark 2:1-12, Mark 4:35-41, Mark 10:46-52, Luke 5:16, Luke 7:36-50, Luke 10:38-42, Luke 18:15-17, John 3:1-21, John 4:4-26, John 8:1-11, John 9:1-12, John 11:1-44, John 13:1-17, John 14:1-14, John 20:19-29.

Suggested reflection questions for each passage

Who are the people in the story? What are their concerns or questions? What is the context, the setting?

How does Jesus interact with them? What does He say and how does He say it?

How does Jesus challenge or encourage the people He encounters?

Ask God what this passage could mean for you and your circumstances. Does He have something to challenge or encourage you with?

How does this passage impact your understanding of Jesus and your relationship and life with him.

Practicing Silence & Solitude.

Enhancing Your Rhythms

Here are some added suggestions to enhance your daily practices or retreats:

Technology Detoxes: Regularly disconnect from electronic devices to reduce distractions and noise.

Nature Walks: Spend time walking in nature to reflect on God's creation and find peace away from daily stresses.

Giving Devices a Bedtime: Set a specific time each evening to turn off all electronic devices, creating space for quiet reflection and prayer.

Journaling: Keep a journal to gather your thoughts and document God's interactions throughout the day.

Listening Prayer: Focus on listening to God in prayer rather than speaking, asking for his guidance and will.

Breath Prayers: Use simple breath prayers throughout your day to center your thoughts on God. Some information on Breath Prayers as a Christian practice: <https://www.soulshpherd.org/breath-prayers/>

Scripture Meditation: Choose a short passage of Scripture and meditate on it throughout the day, reflecting on its meaning and application to your life.

Silent Meals: Have meals in silence, focusing on gratitude for the food and reflecting on God's provision.

Contemplative Walks: Engage in slow, prayerful walking, focusing your mind and heart on God.

Family Practice

Creating a family practice that embraces silence and solitude can nurture peace and spiritual growth for young families. Here's a simple practice:

- 1. Set a Routine:** Choose a consistent time each day or week, such as after dinner or on a Sunday afternoon.
- 2. Create a Quiet Space:** Designate a quiet area in your home. Make it cozy with cushions, blankets, and soft lighting.
- 3. Begin with a Simple Prayer:** Start with a short prayer inviting God's presence and asking him to help everyone be still and listen.
- 4. Read a Short Scripture:** Choose a simple Bible verse or story that is engaging for children. Read it aloud slowly and let everyone think about the words.
- 5. Silent Reflection:** Spend a few minutes in silence, reflecting on the scripture. For young children, 1-2 minutes is enough, while older children and adults can do 5-10 minutes. It's okay if their minds wander; gently bring focus back to the scripture or simply enjoy the quiet.
- 6. Gentle Background Music:** Play soft, instrumental music to help create a peaceful atmosphere if complete silence is challenging.
- 7. Journaling or Drawing:** Provide each family member with a journal or drawing pad. Encourage them to write or draw their thoughts, feelings, or what they think God might be saying to them.
- 8. Sharing Time:** After the quiet time, invite family members to share their reflections, drawings, or anything they experienced during the silence. Sharing is optional, and it's okay to keep some things private.
- 9. Closing Prayer:** Conclude with a prayer, thanking God for the quiet time and asking for his guidance throughout the week.