

# SILENCE

*\*Tension: our lives are busy, loud, and distracting. So many things and people are clamoring for our attention. It's difficult to sit still. Our minds are constantly racing. It's nearly impossible to quiet them even for the briefest of moments.*

## ICE BREAKER

**Question:** What do you listen to while you're in the car?

**Question:** Does anyone here ever just drive in silence? Who would here would never do that? Why or why not?

**Question:** Who here is an introvert? Who here is an extrovert?

*Introvert: someone who's energy is drained from being around people*

*Extrovert: someone who gets energy from being around other people*

## CENTERING FOCUS

*"Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life."*

—Dallas Willard

Have everyone close their eyes and take 10 slow, deep breaths. Then pray for your time together. Before you say "amen" take five more slow, deep breaths.

## LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Last week we were challenged to find someone who is trustworthy that you could begin to confess your sins to on a regular basis, and then actually invite them into that space in your life.

**Question:** Did God bring anyone to mind or give you the courage to approach him/her? You don't need to share anyone's name, but give us a thumbs up or down so we can celebrate with you what God provided.

## THOUGHT PROVOKING QUESTION

**Question:** Have you ever heard the term "awkward silence"? Why is silence with people so strange and weird? Why do you think we feel the need to fill all the spaces with words?

**Question:** Does anyone here have a friendship with someone they can just be with and not say anything without it being weird? Why can we do that with some people and not with others?

## ENGAGING WITH SCRIPTURE

**Matthew 11:28-29 (ESV):** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**Question:** Would you say that your life is most characterized by the word “rest”? What word or words might better describe your life?

**Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV):** do not be anxious for anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

**Question:** Would say that anxiety or an indescribable peace better expresses your experience on a daily basis?

**Question:** If I told you that I knew the secret ingredient that you could add to your life to give you rest and peace would you be interested? Why might rest and peace be attractive to you?

**Question:** What would a life characterized by rest and peace be worth to you? Do you think it’s actually possible to have that life?

Jesus had a lot going on in his life. He had some extremely important things to accomplish. He had a lot of people going to great lengths to get his attention. And yet, Jesus lived a life characterized by rest and peace.

The “Rhythms of Intimacy” are the means God has given us to cultivate a deep abiding relationship with him. You may have heard them referred to as spiritual disciplines, the disciplines of the faith, or the habits of grace. Jesus’ life was saturated with the Rhythms of Intimacy. They are the lifestyle he lived that allowed him to the close relationship he had with the Father and the Spirit which resulted in the supernatural life that he lived. If you want to learn a bit more about the Rhythms of Intimacy listen to the Unexplainable series we just finished (particularly the ones entitled Be with Jesus and Become like Jesus).

The rhythms that are most closely correlated with a life of peace and rest are the rhythms of silence and solitude. We see silence and solitude taught throughout the Scriptures and practiced by Jesus.

**Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 (ESV):** Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few.

**Psalms 46:10 (ESV):** Be still and know that I am God.

**Luke 5:15-16 (NASB):** But the news about him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

**Matthew 14:22-23 (ESV):** Immediately [after feeding the 5,000 Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side [of the lake], while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was

there alone

**Question:** Do you think that it was odd that Jesus would leave the people who wanted to hear the gospel and the people who needed to be healed just to go spend time in silence and solitude?

**Question:** How important must silence and solitude be if Jesus would leave needy people that he cared for to prioritize these rhythms in his life?

## NEW CHALLENGE

Spend 15 minutes practicing the disciplines of silence and solitude each day this week. Suggestions: get up before everyone else. Find an empty room or a closet. Make sure the room has a door that you can close. Sit in a comfortable position. Set a timer for 15 minutes.

Begin by praying something like, "Father please quiet my mind and still my heart. Protect me from the distractions that will be clamoring for my attention. Fix my eyes on Jesus. Make me attentive to your voice."

It may be helpful to choose a word like "peace" or "rest" or "Jesus" that can help refocus your attention whenever you realize that you're distracted. It may be helpful for you to picture yourself sitting next to Jesus or wrapped in his loving embrace.

Remember: you WILL get distracted. At first it will be very difficult to simply sit there, experience God's presence, and listen for his voice. That's OK. Don't get frustrated. Don't feel like a failure. Just getting alone and seeking to listen is a HUGE win. The point is simply to be with Jesus.

When thoughts or tasks enter your mind allow them to pass through. Say your word or picture yourself re-fixing your eyes on Jesus. Perhaps ask God again to quiet your mind and still your heart.

If you have time journal after each time you practice silence and solitude this week.

We've found that 15 minutes is about how long it takes most people who haven't made this a consistent rhythm in their life yet to get to a quiet head space. However, if you find that you can't squeeze in 15 minutes try 10 or 5. Any amount of time that you intentionally focus on spending time with Jesus will be a huge victory!

**Question:** What are some good things that require your time and attention throughout the week?

**Question:** What are some unnecessary things that aren't necessarily bad that you spend time doing throughout the week that might prevent you from engaging in silence and solitude?

**Question:** How/when will you put this into practice this week? How can we help encourage you in this challenge this week?