

Silence Spiritual Formation

Faculty Guide

Optional: Spiritual Growth and Formation *(moving from practices to spiritual disciplines)*

Hospitality

Adele Calhoun describes silence as the practice of freeing oneself from the addition to distraction and noise in order to be totally present to God and open to his presence beyond words.

Silence prepares us not just to hear others, *but to hear God speak in our lives as well*.

Some questions Calhoun asks us to consider:

- How do my conversations with others reflect the way I speak to God and the way I hear him speaking to me?
- When and where do I need to speak more? When and where do I need to listen more?
- At what times and with what people do I need to pay more attention to how my words affect others? Do I speak things with honesty and gentleness?

An exercise from Dr. Jimmy Tan at Trinity Theological College (https://ttc.edu.sg/english/spiritual-resource/resting-in-god-the-practice-of-silence/) to improve listening skills:

Step 1: Settling down (Voices without)

- Find a conducive spot in your home where you may sit down comfortably for a while.
- Take a few deep breaths to settle down a little. You may wish to close your eyes.
- As you do, pay attention to what you are hearing. Listen to the sounds around you. They may be the sounds of children at play, spouses at work, birds chirping, the refrigerator's gurgling or the noise from a hair dryer.

Step 2: Tuning in (Voices within)

- Pay attention to what is going on within you. These are voices from within your mind and heart.
- They may be triggered by a sound from the outside–the children's click on the keyboard, for instance, may remind you of the work you have yet to complete.
- Or they may be triggered by a thought from within–a memory surfaces and it triggers an emotion of regret, fear, or some measure of anxiety.
- Be alert to them. Do not try to shut them out of your mind and heart. Acknowledge their presence and commit them to God in prayer. Should you so wish, you may pray the following prayer:

  "O Lord, I come to You just as I am. I commit to You these voices. Still them as Jesus stilled the storm."

Step 3: Resourcing (Turning to Scripture)

- Turn to the Word of God after you have noticed some of these voices
- Let the Word speak to you as you read it slowly.
- We have chosen ***Psalm 62*** for our theme ***"Resting in God: the Practice of Silence"***
- Read Psalm 62:1-2 slowly in the New International Version:

  Truly my soul finds rest in God;
  my salvation comes from him.
  Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
  he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.

- Read the two verses slowly a second time, but now in the English Standard Version:



For God alone my soul waits in silence;
from him comes my salvation.
He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

- The two versions of Ps 62:1-2 help us to appreciate that resting in God involves a time where we wait in silence before God. We wait in silence for God to save us.
- The psalmist appears to be someone in a place of weakness (v.3) even though he may have previously enjoyed a position of strength (v.4). These verses may help you to reflect on your current situation.
- Take a few minutes to read through the entire psalm slowly in any version of your choice. Pause at points that especially speak to you and speak with God concerning your thoughts and feelings.

Step 4: Re-Entering (Re-engaging life with the offer of God's presence)

- After you have spent sufficient time immersed in God's Word and your conversation with God, bring your time to a close by resting in what the Lord has given to you.
- It may be a word that reminds you of God's promise, a theme that assures you of God's presence or another form of resource that God has given you.
- Write it down in your journal or somewhere significant for reference during the day.
- Spend the final few minutes in silence.
- Then gradually re-enter your day's activity with the resource that God has deposited in your heart. You may wish to bring this short time of silent meditation to a close with the following prayer:

  "O Lord, I will trust in You and wait for Your answer."
  As you resume your activity, may God's presence go with you.

Additional Resources

- *Culture Code*, Daniel Coyle, 2017, Random House.
- *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*, Adele Calhoun, 2015, InterVarsity Press.