



SILENCIO

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SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

WRITTEN BY MATT SCOTT

We have an addiction to noise. Though difficult to admit, let's be honest and face it—you and I are addicted to noise. It's incredibly difficult to spend an hour in the car without dialing up a friend or turning on the radio. And at home, we bombard ourselves with countless mediums of noise. Have you ever found the television blaring in the family room while music is playing through a kitchen stereo...at the same time you are talking on the phone with a distant relative? Or perhaps you're like me and you find it difficult to be anywhere without your close companion, the *iPhone*. Our reality is such that our lives are filled to overflowing with noise and distractions. And if we pay close attention, we see our tendency to fill life's moments with music, television, email, internet, and conversation rather than sitting quietly in a place of unhurried silence.

So, I urge you to ask yourself: *How is the noise of my life drowning out the voice of God?*

Too often we are too hurried to spend alone time with God. Many have called this a "quiet time," while others may consider it a "prayer closet" or "devotion." Regardless, it is most important that these sacred times include the rhythms of silence and solitude. In silence, we quiet both the external and internal noises in order that we might be fully present to God. And in solitude, we intentionally separate from others that we might be attentive to the Triune God. Isn't it true that our fear of being alone drives us towards more activity and noise? Thus, when we purpose to be still and engage in silence and solitude, we learn what it means to be a human-being rather than a human-doing.

Christ Jesus lived out these rhythms, regularly seeking a solitary place where He could be alone with the Father. Amidst his earthly ministry of teaching, healing, performing miracles, and making disciples, Jesus modeled a life of silence and solitude (See Mt. 4:1-11, Mk. 1:35, Lk. 6:12, Mt. 14:23, Lk. 5:16, Mt. 17:1-9). And we, too, are invited to follow His example.

The disciplines of silence and solitude will open the door for deeper intimacy with God. So, I invite you to spend some unhurried, uncluttered, spacious time with Him. Leave behind any agenda or hopes of discovering some marvelous strategy for fixing your life. Simply, sit quietly and alone with the Holy One. Listen carefully for His tender, loving voice. Embrace fully all that God desires to do in you as you sit quietly and patiently before Him

"We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror."

– Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*

"Attentiveness to God's spirit requires deeply receptive, prayerful listening. Practicing the art of attending to the Spirit involves us in contemplative listening. Such listening is quite distinct from the various ways in which we generally listen to another ... it is holy listening, rooted in silence. It seeks emptiness in order to be filled with the Spirit. It is permeated by humility. Such listening assumes that the Spirit is active among us and works through us. It is primarily receptive, patient, watchful, and waiting. Yet it does not fear action when action is called for." – Wendy Wright, *Companions in Christ: Participant's Book, Part 5*

BE STILL MY SOUL

A HYMN BY KATHARINA A. vonSCHLEGEL

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on thy side.
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Leave to thy God to order and provide;
In every change, He faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still, my soul: thy God doth undertake
To guide the future, as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still
know His voice.
Who ruled them while He dwelt below.

Be still, my soul: the hour is hastening on
When we shall be forever with the Lord.
When disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are past
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Be still, my soul: begin the song of praise
On earth, believing, to Thy Lord on high;
Acknowledge Him in all thy words and ways,
So shall He view thee with a well pleased eye.
Be still, my soul: the Sun of life divine
Through passing clouds shall but more
brightly shine.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

- Set aside ten minutes each day for silence. Breathe deeply and become aware of God's presence. Afterwards, journal about your experience.
- Designate a "sacred space" in your home where you can retreat into silence and solitude.
- Drive to work without talking on your phone or turning on the radio.
- Spend an entire day without the use of technology (i.e. computer, iPhone, iPad).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Are you fearful of being silent/alone? Is that curious to you? What might be behind your fear?
- How much time each day do you carve out for silence?
- What do you sense God is saying to you in the midst of your silence and solitude?
- What things are distracting you from hearing the voice of the Lord?

A Prayer of Illumination:

May my soul be stilled in your presence; free me from my propensity to fill my life with noise. And enable me to fully embrace the joy of simply being with You, loving Father. Amen.

SUGGESTED SPIRITUAL FORMATION RESOURCES

The Way of the Heart by Henri J.M. Nouwen
Invitation to Solitude and Silence by Ruth Haley Barton



Suggested Spiritual Formation Resources are available online at Amazon.com