

SILENCE & SOLITUDE

"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

"In a noise-polluted world, it is even difficult to hear ourselves think let alone try to be still and know God. Yet it seems essential for our spiritual life to seek some silence, no matter how busy we may be. Silence is not to be shunned as empty space, but to be befriended as fertile ground for intimacy with God." — Susan Muto

SYNOPSIS:

Silence and Solitude are two distinct rhythms that often go hand in hand. Solitude is a state of mind and heart. In this stance, we intentionally remove ourselves, not merely to experience rest and refreshment from God, but to better hear and engage with His voice. Solitude could also be considered a "container discipline." It is in this scheduled, uninterrupted, distraction-free environment that we can practice other disciplines.

GOD-GIVEN FRUIT:

When Silence and Solitude become regular rhythms, some of the God-given fruit includes rest and renewal. God also provides freedom from constant stimulation and noise. There is liberation from negative habits of speech and a life oriented toward the opinion of others. You may find yourself quieting the internal noise, growing in self-awareness, having a deeper intimacy with God, and developing better listening skills.

EXAMPLES:

As you expand your rhythms of Silence and Solitude consider incorporating some of the following options. Choose to exercise or commute without listening to music, a podcast, or an audiobook. Schedule a retreat for just you and God; go somewhere on purpose without the company of another and spend time in silence with God. Set up a regular period of time where you choose not to speak or choose not to have noise or stimulation.

BASELINE SUGGESTION:

If Silence and Solitude are not regular rhythms for you, we suggest trying the following practice for this week. While doing a task, choose to turn off any background noise and continue the task by offering it to God. Be in the present, doing what you are doing with a listening heart. Pay attention to how you respond to this. What is it like for you? What distracts you?

PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

1 What is your current Silence and Solitude rhythm? What would you like to add or take away to enhance these rhythms in your daily life?

2 Creating a rhythm of Silence and Solitude can help us thrive in the chaos of our society. Where are moments in your day that you could seize little moments of solitude?

3 What would you need to do to create a rhythm of Silence and Solitude in your life?

4 What is your plan for practicing Silence and Solitude this week? Be as specific as possible.

- Downstream**
A practice that comes easily or naturally to you.
- Upstream**
Practices that don't come easily; a practice that seems difficult or unnatural to you.

Would silence and solitude be beneficial for you to pursue? Why or why not?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What are your initial reactions to the idea of being alone or silent?

When have you felt most comfortable being alone? Most uncomfortable?

How do you avoid or resist silence? What do you fill it with? What does this mean?

What tends to pop into your mind when you are alone?

RHYTHM PLAN

What:

When:

Where: