



Silence and Solitude

We live in a noisy world, filled with distractions. If we truly want to draw nearer to God, to deepen our relationship with our Creator, then it is important to set aside some time - to make a “date” with God - and to surround that time with some silence, some spaciousness.

The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation offers these insights into the intent of Silence and Solitude:

- We enter into silence and solitude to become more aware of and responsive to the presence of God in whom we “live and move and have our being.”
- We become more attuned to the “still small voice,” to the Spirit who is already praying within us “with sighs too deep for words.”
- We begin not to see a different world but the same world differently. We are given the grace of beginning to see God in all things and all things in God.
- We become more in tune with our oneness in the Spirit, our interbeing.

Some Scriptures that encourage Presence through silence and solitude:

Isaiah 26:3 *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*

Those of steadfast mind you keep in peace—
in peace because they trust in you.

Isaiah 30:15 *(NRSV)*

For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:
In returning and rest you shall be saved;
in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.

Mark 1:35 *(NRSV)*

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.

Psalms 46:10a *(NRSV)*

“Be still, and know that I am God!

Psalms 62:5 *(NRSV)*

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.

Some Quotations that may be helpful

The Father spoke one Word, which was His Son, and this Word he always speaks in eternal silence, and in silence must it be heard by the soul.

John of the Cross, *Sayings of Light and Love*, 100

Silence teaches us to know reality by respecting it where words have defiled it. ... When we have really met and known the world in silence, words do not separate us from the world nor from others, nor from God, nor from ourselves because we no longer trust entirely in language to contain reality.

Truth rises from the silence of being to the quiet tremendous presence of the Word. Then, sinking again into silence, the truth of words bears us down into the silence of God. Or rather God rises up out of the sea like a treasure in the waves, and when language recedes God's brightness remains on the shores of our own being.

Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*

Above all, give room for SILENCE. John of the Cross said that silence is God's first language. Mother Teresa (who required two hours of silent daily prayer for her Sisters) said that silence is God speaking to us. Isaac of Nineveh advocated loving silence above all things, because it brings you near the fruit which the tongue is too weak to interpret. Meister Eckhart said that there is nothing so like God as silence.

Silence then isn't just a means. In its fullness silence itself is participation in God's being, which is the depth of our own being. Such intimate participation is available to everyone, across every linguistic and cultural divide, since silence is a language that everyone knows.

Silence thus is living, pregnant, sacred space, open presence before sounds emerge, and from which sounds (including thoughts) emerge. Silence is boundary-less, inclusive of everything, full of possibilities. It is spaciousness that can draw us deeper into reality as it is, deeper into the delicate gracious Presence that inhabits the silence and the words and songs that rise from it. We are left more available to the Holy One's healing, transforming, enlightening grace, individually and communally.

Tilden Edwards, *Living in the Presence*

The one journey that ultimately matters is the journey into the place of stillness deep within one's self. To reach that place is to be at home; to fail to reach it is to be forever restless. At the place of "central silence," one's own life and spirit are united with the life and Spirit of God. There the fire of God's presence is experienced. The soul is immersed in love. The divine birth happens. We hear at last the living Word.

Gordon Cosby, from the Forward to *Search for Silence* by Elizabeth O'Connor

I am constantly surrounded by noise:

TV, texts, the internet, music, meaningless small talk, my thinking.

All of it blocks my consciousness, my ability to hear the ME that exists beneath the cacophony

I am my consciousness, my awareness of my circumstance, my presence in every moment.

So I cultivate silence every morning.

I sit in it, bask in it, wrap it around myself, and hear and feel me.

Then, wherever the day takes me, the people I meet are the beneficiaries of my having taken that time--

they get the real me, not someone shaped and altered by the noise around me.

Silence is the stuff of life.

Richard Wagamese, *Embers: One Ojibway's Meditations*