



## Spiritual Disciplines: Silence & Solitude

Our lives are often too rushed, too noisy, too busy. The solution may be found in the discipline of silence.

### Stillness in the Psalms

A good place to begin is in the book of Psalms, where there are many exhortations calling us to be still before God.

*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him. (Ps 37:7)*

*I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and he heard my cry. (Ps 40:1)*

*Be still, and know that I am God. (Ps 46:10)*

*For God alone my soul waits in silence. (Ps 62:1)*

*For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is in him. (Ps 62:5)*

*But I have stilled and quietened my soul; like a weaned child with its mother. (Ps 131:2)*

### Christ and Solitude

We also have the example of Jesus as he makes space to be alone with his father.

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where he prayed.*

Mark 1:35

Christ also calls his disciples to follow him.

*Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.*

Mark 6:31

### First Steps to Solitude

Richard Foster in *Celebration of Discipline* suggests that we use the small silences of the day; before we rise as the house is still silent, the walk to the bus stop or station, waiting in a queue – opportunities to use the moment, to redeem the time. We can build on these foundations to learn to find silence in the business of the day.

### Using Silence and Solitude

Be careful! Solitude is different from isolation; silence can allow the mind to worry and wander – as well as urging us to be still before God, Psalm 37 tells us not to fret. Even in our quiet times we can be too eager to focus on the academic side of study, too quick to rhyme off our list of requests, and think that we have spent time with God.

*Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. Go near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools who do not know they do wrong. Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty with your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.*

Ecclesiastes 5:1-2

You may ask what is the difference between waiting before the LORD and meditation? That is a difficult question. We have previously contrasted Christian meditation with other forms of meditation; emphasizing that Christian meditation is focused on the objective reality of God. An artist looking at a sunset or a flower may study it and reflect on why it is beautiful; how the light and tones, shape and form add to its beauty. But he may also sit back and lose himself in appreciating that beauty. So, we may look to God as revealed in his Word, we may study and reflect (meditate) on some attribute or truth about him and how it relates to our current situation, but we may also find ourselves losing ourselves as we gaze and wonder at the glory of God.

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