



How to Engage Silence

“the Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.” Exodus 14:14

“There was silence in heaven for about half an hour.” Revelation 8:1

There is something God wants to do in silence. God **uses** silence. We, on the other hand, either can't find silent spaces or avoid seeking them. Silence (like waiting) can make us discomforted because we cannot tell if anything is happening. And if we cannot identify what or if anything is happening, we feel out of control.

And, there it is... the problem silence creates. It exposes our fixation on being in control of our lives. Silence seems “unnatural” in that we are natural at hiding. Since the time of Adam and Eve, we cover up. Silence threatens to uncover all that we would rather not see or feel or think.

While many of us would say that we welcome silence, periods of prolonged silence may teach us otherwise. Silence has a power to take us places—in our minds, memories, compulsions, fantasies, anxieties, agendas, struggles, sorrows, bodies, in our needs to produce or to be noticed or to make a difference—and confronts us with the power each of these has in our life.

Adele Calhoun says that silence can be “a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without interruption and noise” that can bring us into deeper freedom and intimacy with God. (p 121, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, revised and expanded)

If you want to learn to keep silent in order to be open to God, hear Him better, live in His love and increase in trust, you may want to try these spiritual exercises:

1. Find a place that is free from distractions. If you are beginning the practice of silence, give yourself a set time (use a timer in order to not clock-watch). Prayerfully place yourself in God's presence. Refrain from long prayers. Simply try to be with God. Notice what happens... the noise you do hear, your breath, distractions, emotions, desires. After your time is up, have a conversation with God about what happened. Keep practicing this several times for a week and reflect on what this is like for you. Make all of this a prayerful conversation with God. Remember that the experience of silent time itself is not necessarily the point, but that the fruit of silence is within your relationship with Him.
2. Practice turning off noise. Where you are prone to add noise, refrain. Maybe that means talking less, going without headphones during tasks, driving without background music or talk, putting down a book. Allow silence to show you what you are attached to. After these times, note what you are experiencing and bring what you notice to God. Allow your prayer time with Him to have silence, as well, in order to let him bring your attention to what He might want you to know and understand.
3. Increase times of silence within even if you are in a non-silent place. Try to listen for God alone... think of possessing a listening heart. What pulls you away? What is it like for you to stay open to God? What are you hearing and sensing? Consider how your trust in Him may be changing as your focus changes.