

Silence in Prayer

Lesson 1: Beginning in Silence

Vocabulary:

to be filled with	meaningful	humble	sacrifice (n)
stress	to rule	frustrated	righteous
purpose	disorder	impurity	to confess
scale	weary	naked	holy
to fill up	burdened	to cry out	sovereign
to squeeze	yoke	to tremble	judgment

Discussion:

Do you ever feel like you are just running from one activity to the next? Sometimes our minds **are filled with** problems, conversations we've had, the news, our future, and all the things we need to do each day. We want to help other people, but life seems too busy or we're simply too tired. Even our days off are filled with housework, homework, or errands. We set out to accomplish our goals, but distractions fill our plates instead. Some days we wonder, "Is this all there is to life? **Stress**? Work? Worry? Where's the meaning? Where's the **purpose**? When does it all end? Where can I find rest?"

Take a minute to think about your life. On a **scale** of 1-10, how's your stress level? Explain.

Now, take a minute to write down all the activities that **fill up** your days, weeks, and months.

Write down the three things that worry you the most.

Write down two distractions that seem to take up your time.

We all experience stress, and some days we can all feel like our lives don't have any meaning or purpose. We are told to take care of our families, take care of ourselves, exercise, eat right, look right, make more money, buy a house, buy a car, buy the right clothes, take a vacation, cook, clean, make time for friends, take time for ourselves, go to the doctor, go to the dentist, and make sure our children do all of these things as well. And if something breaks, like our computer, car, or phone, we can feel really stressed!

If you desire a relationship with God, you might be wondering: "When do I have time to pray, read the Bible, go to Bible study, or go to church? That seems impossible!" And in your life, it might be. God doesn't want us to **squeeze** Him into our schedule. He wants to change our whole life – how we think, how we plan our time, how we make decisions, what we put first in our life. He wants to show us what is **meaningful** and what is not. He wants to give us the strength to live a meaningful and full life every day, but not **ruled** by stress. "For God is not a God of **disorder** but of peace..." (1 Corinthians 14:33). He wants to show us the way of peace. Jesus gives us this promise when we follow him:

Come to me, all you who are **weary** and **burdened**, and I will give you rest. Take my **yoke** upon me and learn from me, for I am gentle and **humble** in heart, and you will find rest for your souls... (Matthew 11:18-30, NIV)

When we are stressed, burdened, and even **frustrated**, we have to ask ourselves, “Who am I following? Am I really living the way God wants me to live? Am I trusting in Him or in people, society, health, money, or my own way of happiness?”

Look at your schedule. If you could change things about your schedule, what would you change?

God actually created us to live in the Garden of Eden that God made for the first man and woman, Adam and Eve: a perfect garden with fruit trees and vegetables to eat. Adam and Eve did not have to wear clothes because their eyes were blind to **impurity**. They did not see each other as **naked** in the same way that animals do not see that they are naked. There was no sin, no evil, no illness, and no stress. The job of man was to take care of the land, and the job of woman was to help the man. They had a relationship with God who took care of their needs.

If you were still in the Garden of Eden, how would your life be different? What would you have and not have? How would your schedule be different?

How do our own desires or stress from society take us away from the Garden that God created?

God’s desire is to bring us closer to Him, closer to His perfect plan for our lives. But we have to quiet our minds enough to let Him lead us. Mother Teresa once said, “God is the friend of silence. If we really want to pray, we must learn to listen, for in the silence of the heart, God speaks. The fruit of silence is prayer.”¹

What do you think Mother Teresa meant by this?

God doesn’t just want to speak to us about our daily needs. He wants to help us with some of the deeper needs that are hidden in our hearts. He can only do this when we are quiet. Solomon, King of Israel in the 10th century B.C. said that there is “a time to be silent and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). There are times in prayer when we should speak, and even **cry out** to God. But there are also times to be silent. David, Solomon’s father, a prophet and a godly leader over Israel, said, “**Tremble** and do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Offer the **sacrifices** of the **righteous** and trust in the Lord” (Psalm 4:4-5).

To David, what was the purpose of silence during times of prayer?

One reason we search our hearts is so that we can see the sin in our lives, **confess** our sins to God, be sorry for ways that we have sinned, and learn from God how to be different. Habakkuk the prophet said, “The Lord is in his **holy** temple; let all the earth be silent before him.” (Habakkuk, 2:20)

Why is being silent important when we are trying to see our own sin? How do you think God can work through this time of silence?

Moses, a leader of God’s people in Israel said to the priests, “Be silent, Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God. Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands that I give you today.” (Deuteronomy, 27:9-10)

Why did God want the people to be silent here? How can too much noise in our heads keep us from following God’s commands?

Zephaniah the prophet said, “Be silent before the **Sovereign** Lord, for the day of the Lord is near” (Zephaniah 1:7). The Day of the Lord is the final Day of **Judgment** when all men will stand before God. Since none of us will live forever, the Day of the Lord is near to us all.

Why should we stop and be silent if the Day of the Lord is near?

Review this study and all the reasons you learned about why silence in prayer is important. Now, close your eyes for one minute and be silent...How does it feel?

This Week:

1. Today, take a minute to close your eyes and be silent. Open your Bible in the New Testament and read I John 1. When you are finished, take another minute to close your eyes and be silent again. In your new prayer notebook, write what you learned or what you heard God saying to you.
2. The next day, take two minutes to close your eyes and be silent. Read I John 2. Then close your eyes for two minutes of silence. Write in your notebook or what you heard God saying to you.
3. Each day repeat this adding another minute of silence and continuing to read one chapter in I John for 5 days. The goal is to reach 5 minutes of silence before and after you read the Book of I John. Share with others what you learned!

¹ Spink, Kathryn, *Mother Teresa: An Authorized Biography* (HarperCollins).