

## Spiritual Practice of Solitude & Silence

Begin to put the elements in place for incorporating solitude and silence into your life on a regular basis. This may take a few days or even a week of experimenting and reflecting, so be patient with the process.

- 1. Identify your space and time.** Explore all the possibilities for a time and physical space in which you can be alone on a regular basis. Preferably you can identify a spot in your home or work space that helps you to settle into a quiet and receptive state of being. Consider whether there are any spiritual symbols or artifacts that you would like to bring into this space to help you be present to the spiritual reality of God's presence with you. Feel free to experiment, noticing what works and what doesn't, until you find the best time and place for you. Once you have identified it, you may want to tell family members or roommates about your new commitment, so they can honor the time by not interrupting you and honor the space by staying out of it during your times alone with God.
- 2. Begin with a modest goal, especially if silence is a new practice for you.** Five, ten, fifteen, or twenty minutes of time spent in actual silence is realistic, depending on such factors as your personality, pace of life, reliance on words and activity. You can increase the time as your capacity for silence increases. The amount of time is not nearly as important as the regularity of the practice
- 3. Settle into a comfortable yet alert physical position.** One excellent posture for beginning is to sit in a comfortable straight-backed chair with back and shoulders straight but also relaxed and open, both feet flat on the floor, hands in a comfortable position in your lap. Over time you may choose other prayer postures.

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- 4. Ask God to give you a simple prayer that expresses your openness and desire for God.** Choose a prayer phrase that expresses your desire or need for God these days in the simplest terms possible. It is best if the prayer is no more than six or eight syllables, so that it can be prayed very naturally in the rhythm of your breathing. Pray this prayer several times as an entry into silence and also as a way of dealing with distractions.

Distractions are inevitable, so when they come, simply let them go by like clouds floating across the sky. Help yourself return to your prayerful intent by repeating the prayer you have chosen. Use your prayer phrase for as long as it captures what is most true about your heart's desire for God.
- 5. Close your time in silence with a prayer of gratitude** for God's presence with you, or pray the Lord's Prayer.
- 6. Resist the urge to judge yourself or your experience in silence.** The purpose of time spent in silence is just to be with God in whatever state you are in and to let him be in control. Trust that whatever your time in silence was like, it was exactly as it should be.

NOTE: the Centering Prayer app (available for iOS and Android) may be a helpful resource. Please contact Pastor Tim if you have any questions or for additional resources.

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