

### *On your own before you lead*

Take one minute to think about whatever you want.  
Take a second minute to focus on God.

#### **Leading My Thoughts Versus God's Thoughts**

With very little preparation the first time you lead this exercise, simply get your timer out and tell the group, "We are going to practice silence together for two minutes." Tell them that for the first minute you will set the timer, and they can think about whatever they want.

If you're using a timer on a phone or tablet, consider using a loud alarm as a way of contrasting the stillness of the silence with the loud world we live in. It's fun to use a popular ringtone to help them connect the concept of how little silence we experience with how quickly the loud things in our lives tempt us and distract us from being able to use our brains simply to think.

Take the following steps to complete the practice:

- Set your timer and say, "Go."
- Break the silence after exactly one minute. Ask, "Is anyone willing to share what they thought about for that minute?" Ask them to try to tell how that minute felt in just a sentence or two.
- Let two to five people share for about thirty seconds each. Encourage those that share to do it in one or two sentences so you can move to the second minute. The primary goal of this first minute is to show how uncomfortable we tend to feel when we're left to sit within our own mind.
- Thank people as they share, and try not to comment much beyond that. Affirm them so they feel more confident to



share again when asked to respond to deeper, more challenging thoughts. Thanking people for their honesty can be helpful long term. Sometimes repeating what a participant says can ensure that the whole group heard and can make that person feel validated and heard.

- After a few people have shared, let the group know you're going to take one more minute to sit in the presence of God. This time, ask them to try to focus on God instead of their thoughts. Give them helpful tips: "You may picture yourself actually sitting with God. You may talk to each other, or you may just tell God you're listening and then listen to see what he has to say. Some people like to go someplace special with God. Enjoy this moment in time with God."
- Encourage the group to sit comfortably and take a deep breath before beginning.
- Open the time with a short prayer, asking God to let the group get present with him.
- Set your timer for one minute, not using a loud alarm this time. I usually use the stopwatch in my phone instead of the alarm.
- When the minute is up, pray gently to end the time of silence. Thank God for letting you sit in his presence. Ask if anyone is willing to share what God did during that minute. Ask how that second minute felt different from the first minute.