



SBAOC Weekly Update

NEWS & PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for the team of three who will be serving in the state of Nuevo Leon, Mexico, on February 8-12. The purpose of this weekend is to encourage and challenge pastors and congregations. Many of these congregations are actively engaged in church planting efforts. In Christ, Aaron Sutton, Psalm 67 Missions Network

If you have any news, prayer requests, or events that you would like to have included in this update, please email the information to spurgeonassociation@gmail.com or call us at 785-456-8513.

PHYSICAL CARE FOR A PASTOR

Silence by Brian Croft

(From *The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd* By Brian Croft & Jim Savastio; pp. 131-138; Evangelical Press; www.epbooks.org)

I've spent most of my adult life hating silence--and didn't know it. It was a major blind spot. I always dismissed my desire to be with people and avoid being alone as part of being an extrovert and loving people. I excused my talkative nature to my heightened relational instincts. These qualities also seemed to help my interactions with people as a pastor, so I thought nothing more of it. It wasn't until I began my own counseling journey out of a personal crisis where I was confronted with this long-held deception in my life.

My counselor observed some behavior in my life that went unnoticed by most, but became flags of concern for him. He saw that I ran from being alone. He realized I was uncomfortable in silence and didn't know what to do with it. He experienced the way I often dominated conversations with my words. This also exposed my terrible listening skills, which he was wise and winsome enough to connect to my silence issues. So, he began to press me in this area and it was difficult. In fact, it led to an implosion of my soul and began the process of healing it desperately needed.

It was through this journey that I learned if my emotions are the

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PURPOSE STATEMENT:

We unite as an association of Southern Baptist churches in order to manifest the glory of God above all. We purpose to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. We covenant to strengthen and support one another, motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

"If there is no church... should you not commence one?" C. H. Spurgeon

COMMENTS ON OUR PURPOSE STATEMENT

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“The Word of God must be preached plainly and simply, not in allusions and doubtful terms, not in innuendoes and learned phrases; not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth; not with the refinements of the schools, but so that the women, and children, and simple people may understand.”

William S. Plumer

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gateway to my soul, then it is silence that exposes the soul. I was not ready to face the ugly things that got exposed. But God in his amazing grace met me in a sweet, powerful way and began a healing journey that has brought a consistent peace in my soul. It was through silence in a quiet place, meditating on truth, and prayerfully asking the Lord’s help that I experienced this deeper level of God’s grace and presence within my soul. It is the same place that every pastor must expose and reach with the power of God’s grace for us to experience his love deeply and, as a result, have a long ministry.

This silence I am advocating for in the pastor’s life is not some form of secular meditation, but a biblical silence and solitude. Don Whitney considers it a significant spiritual discipline of the Christian life.¹⁶ It is a stillness that allows us to grow more aware of our soul’s activity as the Holy Spirit lives and works in us. It is a discipline by which we commune with Jesus, become more powerfully aware of his truth and presence, and more receptive to his unending grace. Puritan scholar Joel Beeke articulates well the kind of meditation that fosters this experience:

Puritan meditation engages the mind with God’s revealed truth in order to inflame the heart with affections towards God and transform the life unto obedience. Thomas Hooker defined it like this: ‘Meditation is a serious intention of the mind whereby we come to search out the truth, and settle it effectually upon the heart.’ The direction of our minds reveals the truest love of our hearts, and so, Hooker said, he who loves God’s Word meditates on it regularly (Psalm 119:97). Therefore, Puritan meditation is not repeating a sound, emptying the mind, or imagining physical sights and sensations, but a focused exercise of thought and faith upon the Word of God.¹⁷

God commands that we be still and know he is God (Psalm 46:10). The Psalmist reminds us our souls are to go into silence and wait on God alone (Psalm 62:1-5). Jesus regularly went off to a solitary place to pray and be still (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16; Matthew 14:13). Silence and solitude is a biblical discipline of the Christian life every Christian needs. Pastors are no different.

This chapter seeks to not only call every pastor to the discipline of regular silence and solitude in his life, but to see this is an essential piece to the care of a pastor’s soul. First, let’s consider the reasons for silence in our life, then turn to the practical of how to begin to embrace it amidst a busy and noisy ministry.

REASONS FOR SILENCE

Most of us can agree on some obvious reasons for silence, such as we all need quiet, time to get refocused, time alone with God, time to pray and read God’s word, and less distractions. However, I would like to give four reasons that are less obvious and connect more so to silence being a catalyst to care for one’s soul.

First, silence exposes the soul. A common defense mechanism is to use busyness and noise to avoid pain in our lives. It could be unresolved pain

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES & EVENTS

True Church Conference—
February 14-17. Grace Life
Church of the Shoals, Muscle
Shoals, AL. Theme: *Honoring
the Excellency of Jesus Christ.*
truechurchconference.com

**Southern Baptist Founders
Conference Midwest—**
February 26 & 27, 2019. First
Baptist Church of Fenton in
Fenton, MO. Theme:
*Reformation in Today's
Churches.* Speakers include Dr.
Thomas Nettles & Dr. Owen
Strachan. [https://
sbfcmw.wordpress.com](https://sbfcmw.wordpress.com)

Spring Bible Conference—
April 5-7. Covenant Baptist
Church, Broken Arrow, OK .
Theme: *The Glory of Christ.*
Speakers: Ron Crisp, Laurence
Justice, Curtis Knapp, & Robert
Walker. www.covenantbc.com

**Saved By Faith Youth
Camp—**June 17-21, 2019.
Webster Conference Center,
Salina, Kansas. Speaker: Dr.
Jim Orrick. Theme: *God Is
Sovereign.* For more
information go to
www.sbfyckansas.com or email
trinitybaptistwamego@gmail.com.

**Encouraged to Endure
Conference—**July 25-27,
2019. Second Baptist Church,
West Frankfort, IL. Speakers:
Joseph Mahlaola, Larry McCall,
& John Snyder. Worship
Leader: Tom Clay.

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and abuse from the past, or it could be a current suffering. Regardless, noise and distraction can give the illusion it isn't there, or that it has no power. Silence can expose that deep pain and demonstrate its undeniable presence in our souls. It is when we are still and silent that we become more aware of our emotions, what our minds obsess over, and the physical pain we feel that could be related to stress and anxiety.

Second, silence confronts the voices. The voices to which I refer are the messages we hear about ourselves. We all have them. They are voices from those throughout our life. They are the messages the enemy loves to whisper in our ears. They are the interpretive messages of those presently in our life. When those voices are harsh, abusive, and lie about our value and identity in Christ, they become very unpleasant to hear and we do what we must to run from them. These voices tormented me. Abusive voices from my past, lies from the enemy, and painful words of criticism in the present all created these messages of failure and self-loathing that were loudest when I was alone in silence. So, I ran from silence to try and escape these voices. I needed silence to confront these voices and speak powerful, gospel truth against the lies I heard and had believed for so long. Martyn Lloyd Jones has famously addressed these voices in the context of depression, stating:

The main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to our self. Am I just trying to be deliberately paradoxical? Far from it. This is the very essence of wisdom in this matter. Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?¹⁸

Silence allows us to confront the reality that when we listen to ourselves instead of talking to ourselves we consequently say harsh, soul-crushing words.

Third, silence teaches us to listen. It was a troubling discovery when I realized how long I had been a pastor yet was still a poor listener. I listened, but it was to prepare to respond. I needed to learn to listen without a need to respond. Just listen and empathize. As I began to embrace silence, I realized I was learning to listen also. I heard sounds around me I never noticed before. I felt more receptive to the message of God's word. It is amazing what happens when you are not so preoccupied with trying to figure out what to say or do next. Just listen.

Finally, silence tests our need for noise. I thought I just loved people and activity. I had no idea that I needed noise because my soul was tormented in silence. Silence exposes the soul and can test how much we have grown to depend on noise to block out the pain of our lives. This is one of the many reasons why we all need blocks of time away from our phone, email, social media, and every electronic device that creates much of the constant source of noise in our life. Pastors do not have to make much effort to find noise and distraction in their life. But silence is another matter. We must fight for it. Silence challenges us to face that pain and allow the power of the gospel to penetrate deep in our souls and begin to find healing. And yet, how does a pastor begin to embrace silence out of care for his soul?

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EMBRACING SILENCE

While away on a silent retreat, I was reminded of these words found in a room dedicated to silence and solitude:

The role of silence was deemed to be important here, as a means of ensuring that one did not fritter away precious but demanding leisure through acedia and small talk. Communities which respect human growth probably need to make explicit provision for solitude, otherwise a potential source of enrichment is lost.

Although I hated silence, I slowly came to realize I needed to make “explicit provision for solitude” for the sake of my soul. As a result, I was led through a three-step process that helped me come to not just realize I needed silence, but caused me to eventually long for it. That three-step process is daily practice, extended times of silence, and scheduled retreats.

First, a pastor must begin by establishing a short daily silence. The Psalmist writes for us to be still and know God is God (Psalm 46:10). Small, but regular goals are the key. Don't underestimate the value of carving out five to ten minutes a day where you sit in silence -with no music playing, no phone ringing, and no people talking. Just sit and take in the quiet. Be aware of God's presence. Know he is God. Pray. Listen to what is around you. I seek this daily experience often on my back porch outside where I go and close my eyes, feel the breeze, hear the leaves rustle, listen to the birds and animals move. Most of all, receive God's grace as you ponder his favor and love towards you. Recite gospel truth to yourself (Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 5:6-11). Center yourself with just you and Jesus before others bombard the remainder of the day. Even if it is just five minutes of silence a day, I find this time invaluable when the rest of my day is full of people and noise. Five minutes each day is better than thirty minutes only once.

Next, a pastor needs to find more extended times of silence. The Psalmist reminds us our souls are to go into silence and wait on God alone (Psalm 62:1-5). We cannot rush waiting. It takes more time. This could be one hour a week where you are away from all noise and people to be alone with God. As the short, daily silence helps keep you centered for the day, this more extended time is what I find more restful and restorative for my soul. This typically happens in my life on Monday mornings when I go on a run on a hiking trail away from people. After my run, I just sit in the quiet with God, aware of his glory in Creation all around me in the woods or near a pond. I remain

still and know he is God and I am not (Psalm 46:10). And I wait for God alone (Psalm 62:1-5). For others, it might be finding a quiet room in the house after the kids go to school. Whatever works for you, be intentional about scheduling this time in your week. You will not stumble on it. Jesus modeled intentionality to go away alone in solitude and pray (Mark 1:35). If the daily silence keeps us going for the day, this extended time at least once a week is what God often uses to restore our souls to him and reminds us of his grace at work in us.

Finally, a pastor should move to scheduling one to two silent retreats each year. It is here where you will discover how you truly feel about silence. I did. This could be an overnight trip somewhere, but doesn't have to be. I have scheduled my silent retreats to be during the day where I will leave early in the morning and return for dinner with my family. This pursuit of silence takes the care of your soul to another level, for it exposes how much you need noise, people, busyness, and distraction. An all-day silent retreat will expose much, including what you use noise to run from in your life. My silent retreats have become a gut-check of things hidden in my soul from which I try to run by busyness in my life. Every pastor needs something that will press those hidden things, causing him to be confronted with them before God, and time to stop and receive his grace and forgiveness.

Jesus has set us free from the power of sin, shame, and death, and has rescued us from the wrath of God we deserve. It is all by grace through faith. Our identity is now in Christ and we are eternally adopted children of the one true God. We have the Holy Spirit of God indwelling each of us by faith, making us more like Jesus every day. And yet, so many Christians fail to experience deeply in their souls the power of God's grace in the gospel. This includes pastors. This was me most of my ministry and it took an awareness of my own soul and how to gain access to it so that powerful grace in the gospel would permeate in those deep, dark places. Silence with biblical meditation is a wonderful tool and gift from God to bring that awareness. We can only shepherd our people to the places to which we have personally gone and experienced. Embrace silence with meditation as that peaceful, healing balm for your noisy, restless soul.

16 See Don Whitney's classic book, *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*.

17 <https://www.challies.com/reading-classics-together/the-practice-of-meditation/>.

18 Martyn Lloyd Jones in *Spiritual Depression*.

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With Dr. Jim Orrick

www.sbfyckansas.com

June 17-21, 2019

**Webster Conference Center
Salina, Kansas**

For youth entering grades 7-12.

Early registration fee: \$160 (includes meals, lodging, & t-shirt)

Questions? Contact Anthony Harwell at 785-477-9417
or anthonyharwell@gmail.com.

*SBFYC is committed to the faithful teaching of Scripture. Our goal is simple;
pour the Word of God into the lives of students and watch God do His work!*

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PRAYER MEETINGS FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING AND REVIVAL

- Fellowship Baptist Church in Onaga, Kansas—5:00 pm on Sundays
- Trinity Baptist Church in Wamego, Kansas—8:00 pm on Saturdays

The Spurgeon Baptist Association of Churches is an association of Southern Baptist Churches that are united to manifest the glory of God above all. We set out to do this by seeking spiritual awakening and revival by intense prayer and earnest obedience to Scripture. As an association of churches we are bound in mutual covenant to strengthen and support one another - motivated and guided by the authority and sufficiency of Scripture - by facilitating faithful preaching of the Word of God, proclaiming the gospel of the risen Lord Jesus Christ to all, making and gathering disciples, planting churches and coordinating unified missions efforts.

We are a non-geographic association seeking to include any like-minded body of believers so that together we might better fulfill the great commission of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our intent is to lean on His instruction and not our imaginations so that He is honored in all that we do. We welcome churches who adhere to the confessions of faith accepted by Southern Baptists throughout their history, including, but not limited to, the Second London Confession (1689) and the Baptist Faith and Message.



Baptist Association of Churches