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Sometimes, though, silence is not golden. If you have ever felt the awkward pause in the conversation, or if you have ever had an angry spouse or parent give you the silent treatment then you know what I'm talking about. (Whisper) Sometimes silence can be deafening.

Awkward, right?

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Silence is a lesser known and lesser used spiritual discipline that we often overlook in our noisy lives.

Silence allows us to hear God. Louis Spivak from Relevant Magazine writes, "In the midst of the audio swirl, the Creator speaks softly. Often, His voice does not try to compete or to overwhelm the other sounds. It beckons. It implores. It asks us to silence the chaos, the entertainment, the other voices. The clamor must cease for us to find what we all search for. When the hush finally begins, then we can listen."

Mother Teresa, in her book, *In the Heart of the World*, also reminds us that in the silence we can find God. "In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. We cannot put ourselves directly in the presence of God if we do not practice internal and external silence. In that silence, He will listen to us; there

He will speak to our soul, and there we will hear His voice. Listen in silence because if your heart is full of other things you cannot hear the voice of God. But when you have listened to the voice of God in the stillness of your heart, then your heart is filled with God.”

It is also important to note that forms of silent prayer can be found in all the major world religions.

So often we fill our time with noise – the tv, the radio, a cd playing in the background. We have to read something or be doing something. But a powerful part of an encounter with God is simply silence.

Silence demands quieting our thoughts, our talking, our thinking, our noise and simply listening to the Lord. Can you listen?

Scripture holds silence in high esteem.

There is a time for silence

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak

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Another form of silence is solitude. Solitude is the act of getting away... From the noises and stresses of life. It is intentional seclusion from all that seeks our attention in order to give our full attention to God. Jesus has given us a wonderful example of this discipline. Remember: Jesus started His ministry years with a period of 40 days of solitude in the desert. And often, throughout His life he would draw back by Himself to spend time alone with God.

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Another way to listen is by asking him many questions. In your God encounter, ask the Lord these questions:

What do you have to tell me today?

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You can also think about keeping a prayer journal and write down the thoughts and the Bible passages you are led to.

Because I fully believe that prayer and silence are so important, let's take some time to practice it here in worship. So I want you all to get comfortable (but don't fall asleep on me!) close your eyes. Clear your mind. Now we enter into a time of silence to listen to God. (*SILENCE*)

Ok... how long do you think that was? That was only a minute long. Did it feel like a minute to you? Why was it so easy/hard for you? What complications did you find? What surprises did you find?

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Another way to listen is by asking him many questions. In your God encounter, ask the Lord these questions:

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Ok... how long do you think that was? That was only a minute long. Did it feel like a minute to you? Why was it so easy/hard for you? What complications did you find? What surprises did you find?

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The effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever.

My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places.

Psalms 62:1

For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation.

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For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

God is said to be found in the silence

Psalm 46:10

Be still and know that I am God

The voice of God speaks in whispers

1 Kings 19:11-12

The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountain apart and shattered the rocks, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

Another form of silence is solitude. Solitude is the act of getting away... From the noises and stresses of life. It is intentional seclusion from all that seeks our attention in order to give our full attention to God. Jesus has given us a wonderful example of this discipline. Remember: Jesus started His ministry years with a period of 40 days of solitude in the desert. And often, throughout His life he would draw back by Himself to spend time alone with God.

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Silence is necessary for spiritual balance. But what does it look like and how practically can it be done in our busy lives you may ask? Well I'm glad that you asked!

First and foremost it begins by getting away from the noise. Find a room in your house that is away from everything. Turn off your TV, phone, radio, and any other noise making device. You may want to put your dog or cat in another room if they are as loud as mine are!

Next you clear your mind. Remember, this is about listening to God, not necessarily him listening to you. So if it will help, you can begin in prayer. But then spend the rest of your time in silence.

Another way to listen is by asking him many questions. In your God encounter, ask the Lord these questions:

What do you have to tell me today?

What would you like me to know about you?

What would you like me to do for you? For others?

You can also think about keeping a prayer journal and write down the thoughts and the Bible passages you are led to.

Because I fully believe that prayer and silence are so important, let's take some time to practice it here in worship. So I want you all to get comfortable (but don't fall asleep on me!) close your eyes. Clear your mind. Now we enter into a time of silence to listen to God. (*SILENCE*)

Ok... how long do you think that was? That was only a minute long. Did it feel like a minute to you? Why was it so easy/hard for you? What complications did you find? What surprises did you find?

We are constantly bombarded by sound and noise. Those coming at us and those from within us. But silence and solitude are important disciplines. It helps to draw us closer to God, and keep us there. It allows God to speak to us.

So my challenge to you this week is to find some time in silence. It may help if you make a plan and carve some time out of your busy and loud schedules. Start slow. Do five minutes to begin. Don't seek to go for too long too soon. But try to be intentional this week. Find the silence. Find solitude. Find and listen to God. Amen.

March 22, 2015

A traditional Taize style service does not include preaching; however, we are going to make an exception today.

Have you ever played the Silent Game? The rules of the game go something like this. "The first one to talk loses." I would bet that just about every parent, older sibling, or babysitter has played a game similar to this. When traveling in a vehicle, watching a hyper child, or when complaining erupts, we want silence. So we play the Silent Game. Sometimes, silence is golden.

Sometimes, though, silence is not golden. If you have ever felt the awkward pause in the conversation, or if you have ever had an angry spouse or parent give you the silent treatment then you know what I'm talking about. (Whisper) Sometimes silence can be deafening.

Awkward, right?

In modern culture, it almost seems like silence is extinct. We have given noise our permission to fill every moment of life. Alarms begin the day and tv shows call it to a close. Even here in this smaller city or in the country, dogs bark, cars and trucks whiz by, and farm equipment can be heard. We fill every moment with noise; the radio, TV, Facebook games, IPODs, computer keys clicking, and power tools. We have created sources of sound and distraction for every situation. As a result, silence has become fantasy, a Neverland we choose to not visit. And why bother? To be socially accepted, we must be culturally connected. To be culturally connected, we have to listen to the roar.

Silence is a lesser known and lesser used spiritual discipline that we often overlook in our noisy lives.

Silence allows us to hear God. Louis Spivak from Relevant Magazine writes, "In the midst of the audio swirl, the Creator speaks softly. Often, His voice does not try to compete or to overwhelm the other sounds. It beckons. It implores. It asks us to silence the chaos, the entertainment, the other voices. The clamor must cease for us to find what we all search for. When the hush finally begins, then we can listen."

Mother Teresa, in her book, *In the Heart of the World*, also reminds us that in the silence we can find God. "In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. We cannot put ourselves directly in the presence of God if we do not practice internal and external silence. In that silence, He will listen to us; there

He will speak to our soul, and there we will hear His voice. Listen in silence because if your heart is full of other things you cannot hear the voice of God. But when you have listened to the voice of God in the stillness of your heart, then your heart is filled with God.”

It is also important to note that forms of silent prayer can be found in all the major world religions.

So often we fill our time with noise – the tv, the radio, a cd playing in the background. We have to read something or be doing something. But a powerful part of an encounter with God is simply silence.

Silence demands quieting our thoughts, our talking, our thinking, our noise and simply listening to the Lord. Can you listen?

Scripture holds silence in high esteem.

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For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak

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