

## WHEN GOD WHISPERS

Psalms 46:10

October 29, 2006 Sunday a.m.

### INTRODUCTION

- A. Last week I shared a quote from John Ortberg in his book, "The Life You've Always Wanted"—"I'm disappointed with myself".
  - 1. I said then and will repeat it today that I am also dissatisfied with my Christian life. How about you?
  - 2. Is there anything we can do about it? The answer we examined last week was to stop trying to be a better Christian and to start training to be a better one. Trying is like setting a New Year's Resolution that usually doesn't make it past the first week of January. Training, on the other hand, involves intentional actions designed to make us more like Jesus. These actions are called "Spiritual Disciplines"—I Timothy 4:7.
- B. Which spiritual discipline should we start with? The most basic discipline underlying all others is silence and solitude.
  - 1. Although each could be considered a discipline within themselves, they are in fact, as connected and inseparable as peanut butter and jelly.
  - 2. What is silence? Keith Drury says silence is abstaining from sound in order to open our spiritual ears and listen more closely to the voice of God.
  - 3. He also defines solitude as seclusion from all that seeks our attention in order to give our full attention to God.

### I. THE PROBLEM WE HAVE, THOUGH, IS THAT WE'VE BECOME ADDICTED TO NOISE.

- A. Its as though we're afraid of silence.
  - 1. For example, how many of you have the television on while you're at home even if you aren't watching it?
  - 2. How many work, study, or read with the radio, CD player or some other music device blaring?
  - 3. It doesn't have to be music ether. For example, I'm addicted to talk radio and while in the car I always have it on.
  - 4. And there are so many more gadgets and devices that make noise today-game boys, etc, and IPODs , etc. Even our computers come equipped with speakers.
- B. Our addiction to noise goes hand-in-hand with our fear of solitude.
  - 1. John Paul Sartre said, "If you are lonely when you are alone, you are in bad company."
  - 2. Someone else put it like this, "If you can't stand solitude, maybe you bore other people too."
  - 3. The need for solitude may have something to do with our personalities. For example, if you are an introvert you actually derive energy from solitude and are drained of energy by too much outside stimulation. One the other hand, if you are an extrovert, you derive energy from outside stimulation and are actually drained by too much solitude. The key is recognize the benefits of solitude regardless of our personality preferences.
  - 4. Thomas Merton has said, "As soon as you are really alone, you are with God."

### II. EVERY GREAT LEADER IN THE BIBLE WAS FAMILIAR WITH SILENCE AND SOLITUDE.

- A. The Bible calls us to silence and solitude  
Psalms 46:10; Ecc. 3:7; Hab. 2:20; Zeph. 1:7.
- B. Jesus often practiced silence and solitude.
  - 1. He began his public ministry with 40 days of silence and solitude-Matt. 4:1-11.
  - 2. Before he chose the 12 disciples-Luke 6:12.
  - 3. When he learned of John's death-Matt. 14:13.
  - 4. After feeding the 5,000-Matt. 14:23.
  - 5. After healing a leper-Luke 5:16.
  - 6. Before the Transfiguration-Matt. 17:1-9.
  - 7. Before his arrest and crucifixion-Matt. 26:36-46.

### III. HOW CAN WE PRACTICE THESE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES OF SILENCE AND SOLITUDE?

A. First, we must find time to be quiet and alone.

1. Victor Frankl, who spent years in a Nazi concentration camp, wrote about this in his book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He said that the enforced community life of this type of prison caused prisoners to crave solitude—the chance to be alone with one's thoughts and experience a few moments of privacy. He worked in the camp hospital in cramped conditions, but behind it was a small tent between some trees that was used a shelter for each day's corpses. Frankl would slip in there when he could and sit for a moment looking out at the green flowering slopes and the distant blue hills of the Bavarian landscape. He said, "Only the steps of the passing guards could rouse me from my dreams." These moments of silence and solitude kept Frankl centered, and, in a very real way, kept him sane.
2. Even in our busy schedules we should squeeze out some time for solitude. How?
  - a. First, be intentional. Don't wait until you have some extra time. You won't have any.
  - b. Begin with some spontaneous solitude and silence. For example, turn the radio off in the car.
  - c. Start with "little solitudes" instead of large blocks of time. Spiritual Disciplines are like exercise, you need to begin slow and work into it a little at a time. (Five minute breaks for coffee or a coke, while waiting for someone, a short walk through the park, etc.
  - d. Find a place and a time.
  - e. Try getting up early, which might mean going to bed earlier.
  - f. Try staying up after everyone else has gone to bed. Don't try this if you have teenagers though.
  - g. Take some time during lunch.
  - h. Try being quiet during your commute to work or school.

B. Second, we must make it as quiet as possible.

1. I heard of a man planning his first extended period of solitude. He took books, sermon tapes, CD's, and a VCR, some of the very things we should be trying to get away from.
2. Don't miss the point here. There is nothing wrong with television, radio, IPODS, Gameboys, etc. But when it comes to seeking God, the less distracting noise, the better.

C. Third, practice the art of silence.

1. Quiet refers to what you hear while silence refers to what you say, or don't say.
2. The first thing we need to do to come into God's presence is to be still as the Psalmist recommends (Psa. 46:10). "The Message" puts it like this, "Step out of the traffic! Take a long loving look at me". In other words, "Stop to smell the roses".
3. Not only is it good to be silent before God, its also good to practice silence before others. This doesn't mean we have to take a vow of silence like a monk does. It does mean, though, that most of us would be much better off if we listened more and talked less.
4. Ever known anyone who talks too much? Don't say preachers.
5. Ever know someone who spoke very little, but when they did, you knew to listen (i.e. E.F. Hutton TV commercial).

### CONCLUSION

- A. Do you want to grow in your spiritual life?
- B. One place to start is by practicing the spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude.
- C. Its not just about being alone and quiet. Its about being alone with God and being quiet so we can hear him as Elijah did (I Kings 19:11-13).
  1. The point of this passage is to remind us that God doesn't shout at us above our daily distractions.

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2. The point is to tell us that God whispers incessantly. Only when we slow down and listen will we hear him.