

Sessions – Silence

A session on silence

For this session, we're going to look at the sound of silence. What we hear in the silence. How we can learn from it. And where do we find silence in the Bible, what is the Godly perspective on this?

Start off

Just start the session by standing in silence, not telling anyone what's going on!

Into Great Silence

You may want to use a docu-movie called, ['Into Great Silence'](#) by Philip Gröning – a movie based in a Carthusian monastery, which received rave reviews. (It is to monks what 'March of the Penguins' was for penguins!)

The film maker gained access to the silent monks for a period of time, before putting together a powerful movie about them. As an MSNBC bulletin noted, "without the benefit of a voice-over, the viewer is left to take in Gröning's breathtaking images and to ponder what it's like to live a life of utter religious devotion."

So silence can be incredibly powerful – and force us to think about things we normally push to the back of our mind. If we're focused on God and his Word, this time of silence – or meditation (this just means thinking about God and his Word, not some weird thing) – then we get to hear from God, get to know God, much more closely than if we skim through the Bible.

Have you ever been to a party or social event and suddenly a silence falls over the room. It can be uncomfortable can't it? We're not used to silence in the Western world any more, our lives are so busy. So often times we're scared to be quiet, have a rest, think quietly, read our Bible alone in the silence. But it's something we need to do.

Silence Exercise 1

Everyone in the room has to be silent for 2 minutes. People don't do or say anything for that time, but simply listen to the silence.

When the time is up, ask people what they thought of the silence – how hard was it to keep silent – what did they hear – what did they think of?

A recent art project set out to record people during 1 minute silences – to show that even in the silence, there were noises. A strange project but if this is true in the world around us, it's also true inside of us. In silence, our minds get very busy.

Why Silence? A Biblical Perspective

It's so important when praying, when reading the Bible, that we shut out earthly distractions and focus on God.

Proverbs 4.20-23 says, " My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body. Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." In Joshua 1.6-8, Joshua receives these instructions from the Lord: "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

There are some key points that overlap in these 2 Bible passages :

1. God speaks to us and we must pay attention to what he says. We cannot listen properly if we are distracted. We are to listen closely to these words. To listen closely to something, you must be attentive / listening.
2. We are to keep God's word in our hearts and never let God's word out of our sight. This doesn't mean we have to carry a Bible in front of us all day. It means that we should let God's word impact us, stay with us all day every day. This means we have to 'take in' God's word into our hearts and minds, allow God's word to speak to us, transform us, help us make every day decisions and live in us. To do this takes time, study, effort.
3. We must obey God's law and not turn away from it, to the right or to the left. How do you know if you are obeying God's law? By knowing it? How do we get something into our heads? By learning it, reading it, thinking about it. We must meditate about God's word day and night.
4. The word of God must do than just being in our hearts. It must impact our speech, our actions and our lifestyle. This is when we take what we know and apply it to our lives.

Challenge : Do you know your Bible? Does it comes to mind? Do you think about what the Bible says in life?

Do you listen to God? Meditate on God's Word, read it, sit alone with God reading your Bible in the quiet, talking and praying to God alone away from distractions

Matthew 6.6 – But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.

We cannot hope to achieve the things that God asks us to do in Proverbs 4 and Joshua 1, if we do not know our Bible. Knowing your Bible and knowing God starts by spending quality time.

Silence Exercise 2

Have everyone divide into groups – or have the whole group together. Everyone stands up. Then just tell people to talk about something, anything, while walking around the room 'telling' anyone / everyone else in the room / group about this. The rule is that everyone has to talk. Keep this going for up to 10-30 seconds (after that, *some* people start losing the ability to talk!)

Stop and ask random people what they learned from others.

What do we learn? That we need to listen!

Repeat exercise in groups of 4 with 1 person talking and 3 people listening. Then the 3 people have to feed back what the person says – they will be able to.

Lesson – to hear from God we need to listen and not be talking or too busy!

3 Bible Verses about Jesus praying alone

(Note – prepare these 3 verses on some paper before hand, enough for one each in your group)

Mark 1.35 (NIV) – Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Luke 5.16 (NIV) – But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Luke 6.12 (NIV) – One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.

Our World

We live in a world where there is so much information bombarded at us, more in a. We wake up, turn the radio on, get ready. Check phone. Go downstairs, get breakfast, put the TV on, read a magazine, the post comes, or the morning paper. Upstairs, someone has their iPad charging, their bluetooth speaker streaming music. Check phone. We drive to work, getting in our noisy car, along traffic filled roads, with our music playing. We're bombed crazy with social media, websites, pages of information, videos, information on white boards, books, magazines, exercises, people, paper. Don't forget to check the phone. Are you surprised that many people burn out?

1 Samuel 3.1-10 – Read Out Loud

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was.

Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, "Here I am." And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

Again the LORD called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD : The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.

The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

The key to these verses comes in verse 10 – ‘Speak for your servant is listening.’ We need to listen to God, be silent as he speaks to us. We need to open our hearts to God (alone) and ask him to speak to us.

We need to learn to recognise the Holy Spirit as he speaks to us. This takes time and comes through knowing God and knowing his Word. If we’re not sure if it’s God speaking, we can check it with the Bible, with other Christians, through discernment, through checking our motives and heart. And by asking God to speak to us again.

Silence Exercise 3

Read out 1 or all of the 3 Bible verses above. Now, ask people to remain silent for 2 minutes but to focus on the Bible passage. Have the verse(s) displayed on Overhead Projector, a white board or a data projector.

End this time by giving everyone a piece of paper and pen. Give them the paper with the verses on and send them away to different parts of the room. Get them to take their Bible with them. Give them up to 5 minutes and tell them to be alone with God, in the silence. Get them to listen to God, ask God to speak to them.

End – Feed Back

To end it may be good to feed back what God has said to people, that they feel able to share.

Talk about how God speaks to us, how we know it’s God or not.

Talk about the need for quiet times with God, in prayer, and in the Bible.