

Contemplation

Prayer Tool: Silent Prayer

What?

Silence is a challenging practice with power. This prayer tool will unpack practical ways to start practising silent prayer.

Why?

“Before the gospel is a word it is silence.” Fredrich Beuchner

“God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of prayer.” Mother Teresa

Bible reference:

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

A quick introduction to Silent Prayer

Silence is arguably the most counter-cultural prayer tool. Our world is increasingly becoming one loud reverberating echo-chamber and the fact that silence scares most people more than it appeals to them shows the brokenness of our culture.

Jesus’ example of going to a solitary place (Luke 4:42) challenges us to actively turn the volume down in our live and internally and externally, encourages us to learn how to be alone with God.

For all the benefits of technology, the biggest temptation we face when trying to engage the practice of silence are our mobile phones. The problem of course isn’t with the devices themselves but how we use them.

Often this is fuelled by FOMO – the Fear Of Missing Out. FOMO is one of the main contributing factors to why our world is more riddled with anxiety than ever. Maybe our greatest gift to the world (and to ourselves in the process) is to become a “non-anxious presence.”¹

¹ Mark Sayers, from Red Church in Sydney Australia, introduced this term

The irony of a FOMO driven culture is that, in reality, we are missing the very thing our souls crave – intimacy with our Maker. Silence can only be fostered through the stubborn refusal of FOMO – by unplugging from the social wilderness.

Do it: Silent Prayer

Stop talking

Discipline yourself to not always have to be saying some words, fixing something, or texting someone. Begin by separating your identity purely from what you do or how you present yourself. You are more than this.

Start Practising

If you are just starting, set aside 5 minutes of silence every day for a week. Be prepared – the first time it can feel like a week! Finding a particular place where you can do this can be helpful. As the days go by you will undoubtedly feel the benefit: becoming more centred in God's presence; more attuned to His voice, and more aware of how God wants to speak into your circumstances and emotions.

Don't run from the emptiness or emotions that start to arise. Ask God to gently help you process these. As you progress in this, begin to build in longer times and more regular rhythms; include a 'quiet day' once every term where you can be intentionally still, alone and silent.

Buy an alarm clock

Setting our phones beside our beds isn't wrong but it is a sign of how dependant we have become upon them. If scrolling our phone is the last thing we do at night and the first thing we do in the morning, it says something.

Buy an old school alarm clock and place your phone in a different room. Then, in the quiet moments before you go to sleep become aware of God's presence and His mysterious peace.

When you wake in the morning why not try waiting until you have showered, had your coffee and spent some time with Jesus before you look at your phone? Steal back some of the moments in between the kettle boiling or the toast popping.

Or maybe on your morning commute, rather than always glancing at your phone at every red light or traffic jam, simply embrace the silence. Jesus is there.

Leave your device

In his book *The Tech-wise Family*, Andy Crouch suggests a challenging but helpful approach to an appropriate relationship with our devices and a corresponding invitation to silence.

One hour a day, one day a week and one week a year, turn your devices off and find a way to be still. Set your email to an auto-response, turn the TV off at the plug, learn to love that 'airplane mode' option on your phone.

Books on Silent Prayer

- *Listening to Your Life*, Frederick Buechner
- *The Tech-wise Family*, Andy Crouch