

All right. Hey, everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you are here with us today. And we are in a series called A Different Way. And we're simply talking about doing the things that Jesus did so we can do the things that Jesus did. We're talking about living the life that Jesus lived so we can live the life that Jesus lived. So, we're looking at His practices, His habits, His disciplines, His lifestyle, if you will. And we're allowing Jesus to teach us how to live our life. And we're almost done with season three of A Different Way. It's only four seasons of this whole thing, and we are almost done with season three. And I know as we've been going through season three, we've been looking at a lot of different practices. And I just want to stop to remind you that these practices are not religious duties. They are not expectations. They are not demands. They are not things you have to do for God.

They are simply invitations of grace. They are invitations of ways that you can do some things with God to open your life up to God to allow God to do some profound things within you. And I was praying for you this week. I was reminded that all of these practices will feel like religious duties, and obligations, and expectations unless you have a vision to be a disciple of Jesus. If you don't have this vision to follow Jesus, to become like Jesus, if you have not been captured or captivated by who Jesus is in the life that He offers you and you do not want to become like Him, then yes, all of these things are going to feel like duties and expectations and religion and responsibilities. But once you get captivated by Jesus, these are invitations to live.

You see, every one of us has to decide whether or not we believe Jesus knows what He's talking about. Every one of us, like you have to decide whether or not you believe Jesus actually knows what He's talking about. Like, does He know what is good and true and right? Because Jesus can't be right about some things and wrong about other things. He's either right about everything or He's wrong about everything. Like, Jesus can't be right about death but wrong about life. Jesus can't be right about eternity but wrong about today. Jesus can't be right about salvation but wrong about how to live your season in your life right here and right now. So, you have to decide whether or not you believe that Jesus knows what He's talking about. Like, do His practices actually work? And so, last week, we talked about the concept of sabbath, the practice of sabbath.

And we just talked about how sabbath is not a rule to keep; it's a gift to receive. That it is a gift to help you enjoy the life that you've been given. And we talked about how it's not a day off; it's a day of rest with God. And if you were here last week, clearly, what happened is the idol of time got exposed in our life. I didn't see it coming. I knew it was going to be something, but I didn't think it was going to be like it was. And so, clearly, the idol of time got exposed in our lives. And I'm not going to spend a bunch of time talking about that today. I'm just going to leave you with this simple question. Like, have you ever given your time to Jesus? Because Jesus can't be right about salvation but wrong about sabbath is what I'm trying to tell you. Like, it's not possible. Like, "Well, I trust Jesus for eternal life and salvation, but He's clearly wrong on this sabbath thing." That's actually a paradox in nature. So, have you ever given your time to Jesus?

The God who said, "Let there be evening and morning on the first day." The God who has given you your number of days. Have you ever taken your time and said, "This belongs to

you?" Because "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world yet forfeit his soul?" What good is it for you to keep all your time to do what you want, when you want, how you want, but lose yourself in the process? You see, when we look at Jesus's life, what's amazing about Jesus is He lived this incredibly restful life. He was never busy. He was never in a hurry. He was never rushed. He was never frantic. He was never stressed out. And yet, if we look at our lives, our lives are constantly in a busy, in a hurry, in a rush, frantic stress. And we have bought into this reality, this culture that we live in, that busyness is a sign of significance. And we hurry for our identity. We hustle for our significance. And we think that if I'm in a busy, if I'm in a hurry, it is a sign that I am successful.

But busyness is not a sign of success. It's an indicator that you're failing at that which matters the most. Because if I'm busy, it's impossible to abide in Christ. And if I'm always in a hurry, it's impossible to live deeply in God's kingdom. And if I'm always frantic, it's impossible to walk in the spirit. If I'm always in a hurry, it's impossible to have really healthy, really loving, really deep, and profound relationship. And so, we have to look at Jesus's life and ask ourselves the question, "Does He know what He's talking about? Does He know how to live life?" And when we look at the rest and the peace and the joy and the contentment of His life, we then have to look at how did He get those things. That's what Jesus did. But what did He do behind the scenes to order to become that kind of person? And the practice we're going to talk about today is silence and solitude. See, Jesus practiced silence and solitude, and that's why He was able to not be in a rush and be a man with peace, quiet in His soul.

And when I say silence and solitude, what you could think about is the evangelical church has picked that practice up over the years and just called it quiet time. If you've ever heard the term quiet time, quiet time is a play off the practice of silence and solitude, but it is so much more than the quiet time that you think of. And we see it all throughout Jesus's life. I mean, right in the beginning of Jesus's ministry, "At once, the Spirit sent Him out into the desert and He was in the desert for 40 days." Silence and solitude, a quiet place, a lonely place, the desert. He withdrew from people in order to be with God and quieted everything down. He gets back. He does a little bit of ministry. And then, very quickly, 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. He didn't do much ministry, and He quickly went back to silence and solitude. Then we see, "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

It wasn't a thing He did here or there. It was literally how His life was arranged, how His life was ordered. "Then," one day, "because so many people were coming and going that they did not have a chance to eat, He said to his disciples, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.'" He's trying to teach them how to live silence and solitude. "So, they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place." They withdrew to be alone, to be with God, to have some silence. But the crowd found them and the crowd came and Jesus fed the 5,000 with the bread and the loaves. And then, He dismisses the crowd. And it says, "After leaving them, He went up on a mountainside to pray." He's like, "I didn't get my silence and solitude. I'm glad you all ate, but I still need my silence and solitude." And then, even at the end of His life, "Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and His disciples followed Him on reaching the place... He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed."

It was His normal practice to withdraw from the crowd, from humanity, from the silence, from the noise, and get alone with God. Jesus practiced silence and solitude as a way of life. And if we want to do the things that Jesus did, like have joy and peace and contentment, then we have to do the things that Jesus did. Practice silence and solitude. Now, I know when I say silence and solitude, many of you are like, "I don't know about that, but I'll take some peace and quiet and some R&R." Yes. The only problem is a peaceful and restful soul doesn't come without silence and solitude. And all my extroverted friends, you're sitting here right now and the panic thing is going off in your head. You're like, "This was the week to miss. Why am I here?" And all my introverted friends are sitting here thinking like, "I got this. My whole life is one big moment of silence and solitude."

Well, let's talk about this for a second, okay? Extroverts, you are terrified of silence and solitude because you love crowds and conversations. You love crowds, people, energy, adventure, activation, all kinds of stuff and conversations. You will talk to anyone about anything at any given time. And all our introvert friends, what we think is we've got silence and solitude down. But the truth is most introverts I know don't practice silence and solitude. They practice isolation and indifference. Introverts are like, "Bro, this is our one. Don't ruin this for us." I know, but we don't practice silence and solitude as introverts. We choose isolation, which is withdrawing from the world to be by myself and indifference. "I would rather not know. I would rather not hear. Because if I hear, then I'm responsible to do something about it." In fact, just the other day I was sitting on the couch.

It was like Saturday morning or something with a cup of coffee, and Colleen was doing a bunch of stuff. And she kept talking to me, and she kept saying a bunch of stuff. And I wasn't really responding, wasn't saying much. And finally, she stopped and she looked at me. She said, "Hey, are we going to practice silence and solitude all day or just for like an hour this morning?" And I thought about it later. It wasn't silence and solitude I was practicing. I was practicing isolation and indifference. I was withdrawing to be by myself. And I was indifferent to what she said. I really didn't want to hear it. You see, there's something about silence and solitude that is incredibly challenging for us to practice, even if you pretend in your mind that you already like it. In fact, one of the things that we've been doing this year as a staff, for the last year, we've had something called Transformation Tuesdays. Every Tuesday from 10:30am to 11:15am, our entire staff gets together and we take one of these practices that we've been talking about and we practice it together. I give them a little five-minute setup and we give them some direction. And then, they take 30 minutes to practice it.

And then, we get back together and we talk about what we've experienced and what God was doing. We've been doing this for a year and we've practiced prayer and Scripture and meditation and confession and celebration. And out of all the practices that we've tried, silence and solitude has been the hardest one for our entire staff. Why? Because our lives are not arranged around it. It's uncomfortable. It's awkward. We're terrified to do it. We don't even know how to do it. And yet, Scripture tells us, "In quietness and trust is your strength." You say, "So what then is silence and solitude?" Well, silence is quieting down the noise, both the external noise and the internal noise. Silence is choosing to shut everything down, to quiet it all down, in a sense, position and prepare myself to be able to be an active listener to that which

God wants to say. I'm turning down the external noise, all of the media and the technology and the sights and sounds and all the things, but I'm also turning down the internal noise.

And then, solitude is withdrawing, not to be by myself, that's isolation. Solitude is withdrawing from the world in order to be with God. I remove myself from everyone and everything in order to be with God. And when I come into silence and solitude, I come with no agenda. I come and I am present and I present myself to God to allow Him to do a deep work within me. That's silence and solitude. It's I am present and I have presented myself to God, and asking Him to do a deep work within me. And the interesting thing about silence and solitude is it requires faith. Because when I enter into silence, what I'm saying is that God is about to speak to me. And when I enter into solitude, what I'm saying is God is here. So, silence and solitude in its own way is a declaration that God is speaking and that God is here.

It's a declaration of faith that I am present and I have presented myself to God in order for Him to do a deep work within me. And so, I love this verse that we started service with today. "Of one thing I am certain: my soul has become calm, quiet, and contented in you. Like a weaned child resting upon his mother, I am quiet. My soul is like this weaned child." Can I ask you an honest question? Is your soul calm, quiet, and contented today? Like a child that sleeps on his mother's chest? Is your soul quiet, peaceful? That's why we need silence and solitude because this is where it takes us. The problem is, if we're honest, our lives are not arranged around silence and solitude. Our lives are arranged around noise and chaos.

If you actually want to look at your life and how it's ordered, how it's arranged, your life, much like mine, is probably ordered, arranged around noise and chaos. Think of how much noise is in your life. Think how many voices, think of how many sites, think of how many sounds, think of the technology, think of the social media, think of all the conversations and all the information and all the podcasts and streaming services and games and music. I mean, it is like noise 24/7 coming at us. And then, think of the chaos, the commitments, the activities, the duties, the responsibilities, the drama that we have literally arranged our life around it. And we've chosen it. A lot of you are sitting here. You're like, "I hate the noise and the chaos, but it just comes at me." Okay. If you carry a phone, you have chosen to arrange your life around noise and chaos. What is a phone? A phone is a device that will allow any voice in the world to get ahold of you at any point in time.

And so, all of a sudden, noise starts coming at me. And noise is screaming, and every notification and every sight and sound and thing. And then, all the chaos, the drama of that person from high school and homecoming drama and what's happening in the election and all these things, I literally set notifications so I can be arranged around noise and chaos. Bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing, bing. Yes. Like, literally. So, I don't have a problem with the phone. I'm just trying to tell you what it is. When we carry it around, you are literally saying, "Noise and chaos, I have arranged myself around you." This is why it's so hard. We're always like, "Where's my phone? Where's my phone? Where's my phone? I can't put my phone down." Because the moment I don't have a phone, my life is moving towards silence and solitude. And that is very awkward and very uncomfortable. And we start backing up like, "I don't know what you're talking about today, bud, but I don't like it."

See, to practice silence and solitude is literally a holy rebellion. It's a divine resistance. It's a heavenly defiance against the order of this world. You don't defeat noise and chaos by just choosing less noise and chaos. You defeat noise and chaos by the opposite spirit of silence and solitude. So, when I choose silence and solitude, when I quiet things down and withdraw to be alone with God, it's literally a holy rebellion, a divine resistance, a heavenly defiance against the kingdom of this world, the kingdom of noise, if you will, that I am choosing to remove myself from, saying, "You can be chaotic, you can be noisy, you can go as fast as you want, but I am choosing to step out of that stream and I am quieting things down and I am withdrawing in order to be alone with God because that's where a healthy soul is found." See, an analogy, you can think about of your life and mine is I think our lives are like a giant snow globe.

You know those snow globes that you see at Christmas time, and there's a picture or a scene inside of here and you shake it up, and all the snow starts going everywhere. I think our lives are like this giant snow globe, and it's noise and chaos floating around all over the place. But the moment you set that thing down, the noise, the chaos, all comes down, and all of a sudden, there is the silence and the solitude. And when all the flakes come to the bottom, you can actually see what the scene is all about. See, if you look at people in the Bible who practice silence and solitude, they had this divine clarity. They had this heavenly vision. They could literally see into the open heaven. They could fix their eyes on Jesus. They could see the invisible in midst of the visible. Moses in the burning bush, David in the pasture, Jesus in the desert place, Paul in the lonely places.

They have this divine sense of clarity. Why? Because they got out of the noise and the chaos and allowed everything to quiet down to see what was really there. Can I ask you a question? Do you even know what the scene of your life looks like? Do you even know what the picture in the snow globe is? Or is there so much noise and chaos that you like, "Noise, chaos, noise, chaos, noise, chaos." You know all the noise and the chaos and why you're annoyed at everyone and everything, but you actually have a clarity of what your actual life is. And the paradox is we're the ones shaking it all the time because we're the ones who have chosen to arrange our lives. So, sometimes you just got to set it down. And people who practice silence are able to step back into noise with peace in their soul. And people who practice solitude are able to step back into chaos with power in their soul.

This is why Scripture tells us, "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him." Sometimes you just got to be still and wait on the Lord. Are you with me so far? Shh, we're practicing silence and solitude. Why is it that we don't like it? There's lots of answers. And I would actually encourage you this week. That would be a great question for you to wrestle. Why is it that your life, when Jesus invites you into the quiet place, why is it that your life is not arranged for it? There's lots of answers. And a couple I would give you is like, just one is, I think the reason we don't like it is we like control. And the moment you enter into silence and solitude, just to be super clear, you give up all control. The moment you go into solitude and it's just you and God, you understand you've given up all control. There's nothing to hide behind. There's no distractions left. There's no mask you can wear.

There's nobody else you can blame. It's just you and God alone. So, you have immediately given up all control. And when all the noise comes down, all of a sudden, there's this silence

that reminds me, "I am not in control. He is." And what you'll hear from people when they talk about silence and solitude, they'll say things like this, like, "Oh, I don't have time for silence and solitude. I feel so unproductive when I'm in silence and solitude. I have so many things to do. I have so much of my life I want to live, and silence and solitude feels so pointless and purposeless." And this is where theology comes into play. Because you're either what you do or you are what Jesus has done, but you're not both. So, your identity is either defined by what you have done, or your identity is defined by what Jesus has done. And if you are what you do, then silence and solitude is failure. But if you're what Jesus has done, then silence and solitude is strength.

In fact, even the quiet times that we say we have, just so we're clear, they're like a picture of control. You pick the time that you're going to meet with God and you go in and you have your little agenda of how you're going to do it. "And I'm going to read this chapter. Oh, I like this. And then, I'm going to make a little Instagram thing and make it cute and make it motion graphic while I'm meeting with God. And then, I'm going to post it. And while I posted it, I got a little distracted. So, I'm looking at my other friends. And then, I got to follow up with this person. And then, I'll flip on that music in the end and then ask God for a few answered prayers." That's control, yes? But silence and solitude is to come without an agenda, without any control, and to present ourselves to God and allow Him to do what He wants to do within us. So, I think we're terrified of control. The second thing, the reason I think we don't like silence and solitude is because we have a lot to say about everything. We have a lot of opinions and judgments and criticisms and gossip and slander. We have a lot that we want to say about everything.

And we feel like every emotion, every feeling, every idea that we have ever had must be spoken into the atmosphere for everyone to hear. "So, I don't want to go into silence because I got a lot to say about you." This is why James says, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." This is a great picture of silence and solitude. Silence and solitude is where I'm quick to listen and slow to speak. That I have quieted things down, and I'm actively listening to God and what He wants to say. And as we're quick to listen and slow to speak, it becomes slow to get angry. If you struggle with anger, silence and solitude is one of the best practices you can introduce into your life. Why? Because what is anger? Anger is my will has gotten violated. So, I feel out of control. And now I'm angry because I didn't get what I want. And now, I feel the need to tell everyone why I didn't get what I want and why it was their fault.

And all of a sudden, if I get into silence and solitude, I start learning how to be quick to listen and slow to speak, and my anger starts subduing. Why? Because the snow globe of my life has calmed down so I can actually see what's happening and what God is doing. Or how about this verse that says, "We get it wrong nearly every time we open our mouths." I could have just done that one sentence for the day, said, "Bless you, have a great week." "If you could find someone whose speech was perfectly true, you would have a perfect person in perfect control of their life. A bit in the mouth of a horse controls the whole horse. A small rudder on a huge ship in the hands of a skilled captain sets a course in the face of the strongest winds. A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything or destroy it." It says our words lead our life. And silence and solitude help us take control over our words

because we let so many words fly that we ride our horse off a cliff and we take our boat and we smash it into a rock.

But if we will learn to practice silence and solitude, we actually learn to bring our life into submission and to surrender with Jesus. And then, I think we don't like silence and solitude because we prefer to be absent over being present. If you look at where we're most comfortable, most of us are the most comfortable when we're absent. We're the least comfortable when we're present. And you say, "What does that mean?" It means like, wherever you are, that's not where you are. So, your body is here. Like today, you might be absent. You're here, but where are you? In fact, if you think of a phone, and this isn't a knock on phone days, it's just acknowledged for what it is. What is a phone? A phone is a portal. And every time I'm on my phone, I'm entering a portal and I'm going somewhere else. So, my body is here, but my spirit is now somewhere else.

And I would rather, most of us would rather go through the portal into my fantasy or into that friendship or into that connection or into social media or into that drama or into that news story, into that hobby, into that sports score. It's like I go in and I go through and I'm here, but I'm not really here. And this is why parents get so upset with students when they're on their phone and they're trying to talk to them. And this is why students get so upset with their parents when their parents are on their phone and they're trying to talk to them. And this is why every guy in this room knows that when he's watching sports and his wife is trying to say something to him and he's saying, "Uh-huh, uh-huh." And she says, "You're not listening to me." Every one of us know you are not listening. You're not there. You are absent. You've gone through the portal. And most of us would rather be absent than present because it's too awkward and uncomfortable to be present in our life. So, we would rather be absent and live someone else's life. What a sad way to live.

That I would rather not live my life, I would rather be in someone else's life. When all the while God is saying, "Hey, just be present. Just be here." I mean, if you think about Jesus, He says, "Your kingdom come," this is what we should pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God's kingdom is where His will is done. It's the rule and reign of God, right? Wherever God's will is done, that's where His kingdom has come. And God rules His kingdom through words and actions. Like any king over a kingdom. How do they rule? Through what they say and what they do, words and actions. So, if you can catch this, when I practice silence and solitude, the absence of words and the absence of action, what I'm saying is, "God, I am through the absence of words and actions, submitting and surrendering myself to you because I want your words and your actions to become my words and my actions. So, in this quietness and in this withdrawing from the world, I am taking my kingdom or queendom, and I am submitting it and surrendering it to you that I might hear your voice and be around your actions. That those might become the things that have gripped and captured my heart."

Does that make sense to you? I know, it's silence and solitude. It's uncomfortable. It's awkward. And so, I'm just taking you on a path here a little bit and just pointing out some things that you'll be able to figure out. And I want you to just see these couple of things of what silence and solitude really does in the end. See, silence and solitude will remind you that you're never alone. We live in a world that has an epidemic of loneliness. Rejection and abandonment are

rampant. We're lonely. We're lost. We want to be seen. We want to be known. We want to be loved. We want to be validated. So, we spend most of our lives trying to earn the approval and the affirmation and the affection of the crowd in order to deal with this deep-seated loneliness within us.

But the paradox is this. It's only in solitude where you will discover that you are never alone. It's only when I withdraw from the world and get alone with God that I realize I have never been alone, and I am not alone, and I will never be alone. Why? Because it's in solitude where I realize that He is with me. "Never will I leave you; Never will I forsake you. Do not fear, for I am with you." It's only in silence and solitude where you actually discover that you have never been alone and you will never be alone. Listen, I don't know about you, but in my life, I feel the most lonely when I'm in big crowds. I feel the most lonely at a football game, at a school event, at something out in the city. That's when I feel alone. I feel the most connected and alive when I am alone with God. In fact, this week, as I've been practicing and preparing for you, I've been practicing silence and solitude in my own life.

And literally, like every morning as I've done silence and solitude in my office, it's like, "Boom, He's there. He's real. He's alive." And just the fact that I'm willing by faith to say, "Silence, you're going to speak solitude. Solitude, you're here." Boom. He comes in and I realize I'm never alone. So, many of us never experienced the love, the acceptance, the life, the favor that we deeply long for in our souls because we never get alone with God because we're afraid of ourselves and I'm terrified of what's in my own head. And I'm terrified of what's in my own soul. And I am terrified to see what the picture of the snow globe actually looks like. So, I would rather arrange my life around noise and chaos to take the edge off of loneliness instead of getting alone with God to realize I have never been alone.

It's in silence and solitude where you figure out you're never alone. Second thing is silence and solitude. Listen to me. It exposes your soul like nothing else. When you get into silence and solitude, it's just your soul and God. That's all there is. There's nothing to hide behind. There's no distractions. There's no one to blame. There's no information. There's nothing to point out. There's nothing to make it about. There is no mask you can wear. When you get into silence and solitude, it exposes your soul. And there you are. It's Adam and Eve in the garden, when they take the fruit and they sin and they violate what God asked them to do. And then, it says, "They heard the sound of God walking through the garden." It was so silent that they could hear God's footsteps on the leaves. And they were alone.

And in that silence and solitude, they were exposed when God says, "Adam, where are you?" And Adam comes out and he says, "I was afraid. When I heard you, I was naked and ashamed. And so, I hid." And He says, "Who told you, you were naked? Did you eat from the tree I told you not to?" And in that moment, there is nothing for Adam to hide behind. He is fully exposed before God. This is why we're terrified. I mean, if I asked you the question, if I just said to you, "Hey, how's your soul?" How would you answer that question? Most of us would start talking about the things that we're doing, the activities, the adventures, the accomplishments, or we would start complaining about the people in our life while they're messing everything up. That's not your soul. How's your soul? Do you know what a soul is? Do you have one?



Have you ever seen it? Do you know what condition it's in? See, it's only when we get in silence and solitude where our soul actually comes out because your soul is not loud and demanding. So, if you arrange your life around noise and chaos, your soul, like a turtle, will withdraw. It will pull inside of there in order to protect itself. But when things get quiet enough, it might poke its head out and you might actually see it. And when it gets exposed, God can actually do some healing and some freeing, and some restoring. I mean, just think of the woman at the well. Remember that story? You probably read it totally different from now on when you see it as a picture of silence and solitude. It's just her and Jesus at the well, silent and alone. And Jesus starts talking to her, having a conversation with her. And He says, "Why don't you go get your husband?" She says, "I don't have a husband." He says, "You're right. You've been married five times and you're living with a sixth man."

Exposure. She's got nothing to hide behind. Why? Because it's silence and solid. There's no one else to blame. There's no distraction. There's nothing to make it about. She is literally fully exposed before Jesus. And because her soul is exposed, because all of the snowflakes come down and He can actually see, she can actually see the reality of what's there. He is able to do a deep work in her soul because she is present and she has presented herself to Him to do a deep work inside of her, that He does this deep work inside of her. She leaves her pale, runs back to her town with this restored, alive in the soul. And I think that is such a great picture of silence and solitude. We get quiet before God. We get exposed, and He does amazing work within us that gives us this profound sense of strength and healing and restoration that most of us never experience in our life. Because we keep it so noisy and so chaotic that our soul doesn't come out.

I mean, just think about what we do when we do quiet time with God. We get quiet time with God to ask God for things that are very practical and shallow. "I get alone with God because I have some things I need Him to do that are practical and shallow." Like, "Should I buy this car? Should we buy this house? Should we move here? Should I do this sport? And should I marry this person?" Very practical, very shallow. But if you get quiet enough when you ask those questions, God doesn't seem to answer them, does He? Like all those times you do quiet time for the practical and the shallow, how effective are those answers? My guess would be not in a way that you're satisfied with. And God doesn't answer them because He's trying to get us to this place of silence and solitude where He can ask us questions that are deep and profound. He doesn't give us shallow and practical answers. He asks us questions that are deep and profound.

Like, "Where are you? Who do you say that I am? And why are you so afraid? And who told you that? Who is it that you're looking for?" And all of a sudden in this exposed soul, God does this deep work. He starts healing and restoring and freeing all because we were willing to turn down the noise and get rid of the chaos for a few moments. And then, it allows us to hear God's whisper. See, we all say we want to hear God's voice, but we arrange our lives as if we never wanted to hear God's voice. "I want to hear God's voice. I just need him to speak louder." Well, God is not interested in competing for your attention. He's very secure in Himself, so He doesn't need to do all these things to get you to arrange your life. He's pretty good. He's just waiting for you to quiet it all down.

And God doesn't speak in the spectacular. He speaks in the whisper because the whisper causes us to lean in. In fact, do you remember the story of Elijah? "The Lord said, 'Go out and stand in the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord wasn't in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord wasn't in the wind. After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord wasn't in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elija heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him." You see, God's voice is not in the spectacular, it's in a whisper. Is your life arranged in such a way that you can actually hear the whisper?

What does God want to say to you? What has he been trying to say to you? The problem is our life is so noisy and so chaotic we can't hear Him. Then we say He doesn't talk. This is why silence and solitude is a declaration of faith. Because when I quiet my life, I'm saying God will speak. And when I choose solitude and withdraw from the world to be alone with God, I say He is here and I expect Him to speak and to be present. In fact, I love the psalmist that says, "Be still, and know that I am God." There is some knowing of God that can only be found in the stillness. There are some experiences, encounters, revelations, relationship that you can have with God that will never be found in the spectacular, not in the earthquake, not in the wind, not in the fire. As much as we love all that, it can only be found in the stillness. The question is, is your life arranged in a way that ever allows you to know the part of God that is only found in the quiet?

In fact, last verse, Psalm 23 that we memorized earlier this year, another practice. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul." Do you see it? Silence and solitude are the way we position ourselves to be present so He can do a deep work within us. He leads us to green pastures where we're alone with Him, withdrawn from the crowd. And He brings us beside quiet waters. He turns down all the noise out there and all the noise in here so that we can be present and present ourselves to Him so that he can do a deep work in here. So, here's your practice plan for this week.

Wake up early every day this week and practice silence and solitude for 10 minutes. Just try it. Just try it. This is it. I'm not asking you to add anything into your life. I'm asking you to take 10 minutes of sleep out of your life. Every day this week, 10 minutes, wake up earlier and practice silence and solitude. You say, "Well, what do I do?" You find a quiet place in your house or on the back porch or on the park, and you set a timer and you put it in another room. You put it away from you so you're not by your phone and you set timer for 10 minutes and you then present yourself to God. You say, "God, I've turned down all the noise out here. I'm working on turning down the noise in here. I have withdrawn from my family, my friends, my responsibilities, the crowd, this world, all the things that need my attention today. I've withdrawn from them to be with you. God, I am trying to be present and I want to present myself to you so that you can do a deep work within me."

You say, "Then, what do I do?" Then, you sit there and you wait on the Lord. And you let Him do what only He can do. And if you practice this, what you will find very quickly is your mind has been trained for noise and chaos. You will literally feel like you're going like an addict. You

will be going through withdrawal because you are. You're addicted to noise and chaos. The way an addict is addicted to alcohol or drugs. You will literally start feeling yourself going through withdrawal, getting antsy, getting anxious, getting overwhelmed, getting stressed. You will literally realize how untrained your mind is because it starts going like this and running 10,000 things like a giant balloon blown up with all this stuff in it. Silence and solitude let it all come out for it to be blown back up of what we're actually supposed to be thinking about and meditating on and focusing on. And what you'll probably figure out for most of us is it's going to take you, the reason I'm asking you to do this every day this week, is it's going to take you almost every day this week to just get to zero so you can have a moment with God.

And when you realize that it's going to take you every day this week to just get to a place where your snow globe is settled enough to actually see what's there to actually hear from God, my hope is, is that that terrifies you and causes you to rearrange your life in some way. Because at some point in time, here's what I want to say to you. If you can't do 10 minutes, do 5 minutes. If you can't do 5 minutes, you need to reconsider how you're living your life. Nicest way I can say it to you. You're like, "But I like it when you do that. If you can't do 10, do 5. If you can't do 5, do 1." No, if you can't do 5, if you can't do 5, you literally need to consider how your life is ordered because you're scrambling your own life. If you can't sit in a drive-through window to get a fast-food meal without getting on your phone, what is that? That's the terrifying nature of silence and solitude.

Can you go for a walk without AirPods? "Who does that?" Exactly. AirPods, do you realize that it is a constant stream of noise in your head? Have you ever just... And you're like, "But I listen to good things." I don't care what you're listening to. You're listening to noise. Everything that you listen to and you put in your head is the noise of someone else's head that has been declared into the atmosphere. So, if you're overwhelmed by the noise in your head, just think about the fact that you're choosing to fill your head with the noise that's in someone else's head. It was the noise in here that created that social media post or that song or that podcast or that TV show or that gossip channel or whatever the thing is, right? Someone else's noise got released and you're not choosing to listen to it. Now, there's great things to listen to. That's what you need to figure out, but just acknowledge what it is. So, if you're like, "I can't do any of this," then great. First thing would be, "Can you drive to work or school without the radio on?"

"I have a radio." Okay. I know. That's archaic. Okay. Spotify, a podcast, something like pick your... I know sometimes I show you how un-techy I am. Can you do that? Can you literally, when you find yourself sitting on the couch with your children, can you just not have be on your phone? "I'm not on my phone. I'm on my computer and I'm doing things for the family." Oh my gosh. Just acknowledge... I should have brought a snow globe. It's you. It's you're shaking it. And then, you get mad at everyone else. But here's the deal. The world isn't shaking your snow globe. You're shaking it. And Jesus could have said He was the most important, most significant. The crowds wanted Jesus... Just hear me for all of us. The crowds wanted Jesus a lot more than they want you. And the religious people wanted to ruin Jesus's life a lot more than anyone wants to ruin your life.

And Satan wanted to get Jesus a lot more than He wants to get you. So, if Jesus could do silence and solitude and say they don't have the ability or the authority to shake up my life, then how much more so can I? You say, "They don't have the ability or the authority to shake up my life. I have to arrange it differently, though. And I have made so many choices that have arranged my life." And this is the challenge. When we talk about in this whole series, train yourself to be godly, we've trained ourselves for noise and chaos. This is why when you put your shoes on and you walk to the mailbox to train for that marathon, it's exhausting the first time because silence and solitude is literally for most of us like, "Man, I don't even know that I'm going to make it to the mailbox and back." Why? Because I've been trained to run triathlons of noise and chaos. So, I am so trained to do... Oh, I can do the two-mile swim and the bike thing and the Ironman. Yes, of noise and chaos.

Can you get around the block in silence and solitude? It's a great question, isn't it? You're like, "I didn't like this." I know. I don't like sitting and teaching either. I'm trying to prophetically demonstrate what we're talking about. I'm not sure it's working for any of us. But you can't use your personality wiring or your lifestyle as the excuse of why this doesn't work for you. And you have to decide how interested you are in having a quiet and peaceful soul. If that doesn't captivate you as a vision of who you want to become, then pass silence and solitude. Don't do this this week. Come back next week as we go on to the next one and just keep moving forward.

But if there's this part of you that longs for Jesus's invitation to have rest in our souls, then this is part of the pathway to get there. Just don't expect the world or your spouse or your children or your parents or your friends to celebrate this because their life is arranged around noise and chaos, and they want to suck you into it. But if you'll practice silence, you can enter into their noise with peace. And if you'll practice solitude, you can enter into their chaos with power. And so, maybe, just maybe, we could try this this week. If you can't do 10, try 5. If you can't do 5, look at your life. And maybe, just maybe, God will show you what your life actually looks like as the noise and chaos comes down. And maybe, just maybe, you'll hear or see God's voice in some profound way because you're making a declaration of faith that God is speaking and that God is here.

Close your eyes with me. It's amazing how uncomfortable we get even with 15 seconds of silence together. The gentle whisper of the Holy Spirit I believe is speaking to all of us and inviting us to a holy rebellion, divine resistance.

The heavenly defiance against the noise and the chaos of this world. Jesus wants to quiet and calm your soul, not just a day off and not just a day where there's no homework and not just a day when your family doesn't irritate you, but actually a heart posture that has peace and quiet, regardless of what's happening in the snow globes of anyone else's life. And so, Holy Spirit, give us courage and faith to enter into the quiet place with You this week. Help us not be afraid of the desert, the lonely place, the place without noise and crowd that we might hear You and see You.

Jesus, thank You that You are so compassionate and tender. That You know our struggles and You know how hard this will be for some of us. And yet, You promise to meet us in those

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places. That this isn't a duty to perform or an obligation to fulfill, this is an invitation to come away with You by ourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. If you fall asleep this week trying and silence in solitude, that's okay. Shows you how tired you are and God wants to bring you rest. If you feel like you fail and you can't do it, that's okay. You're moving towards God, and He is showing you there's a different way to live your life. So, Jesus, teach us a different way. Help us do the things that You did so we can do the things that You did. In your name, we pray. Amen.