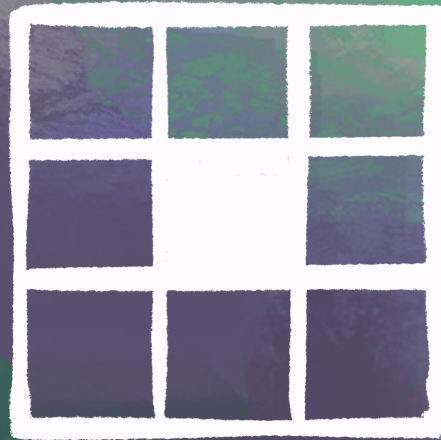
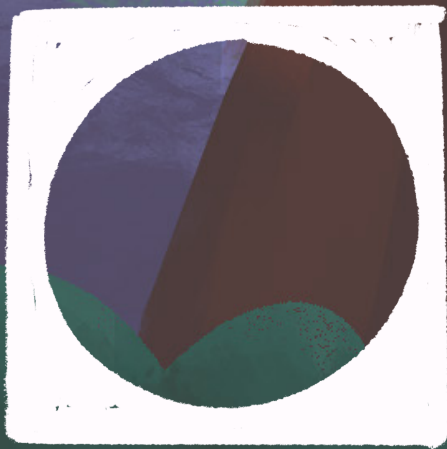


# ATTENTIVENESS

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE



# SESSION 1: BEFRIENDING SILENCE: THE BASICS



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## Main Text:

Psalm 16

## Take Home Exercise:

Centering Prayer

## OPENING EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

Lead your group through the below exercise:

Gather together as a community group in a comfortable setting—around a table, on a couch, on a living room floor, etc. Have someone lead a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together as a group. Why silence? In our overcrowded, busy world, silence (even if only for a few minutes) cuts through the noise and allows space to calm your mind and heart before God.

Now, spend a minute or two in silence together. Instruct your group,

“As you sit in silence, invite the Holy Spirit to quiet your heart and mind from distractions. Ask God if there is anything he would like to share with you during this time.”

Close this group time of silence with a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for the opportunity to be together.

## OPENING DISCUSSION (15 Minutes)

Spend a few minutes debriefing the take-home exercise from your last gathering, then move on to the opening discussion.

Today, we launch the first practice of our Rule of Life: attentiveness to God in contrast to a world of distraction and hurry. We do so by cultivating two specific habits: silence/solitude and Sabbath. For the next six months, we will work on developing the habit of silence and solitude, and in the spring, we will start working on the habit of Sabbath.

Discuss this opening question for a few minutes.

•In your estimation, what effect does distraction and pace of life have on our modern world? What effect does it have on us as humans?

We live in a distracted age, from iPhones to the 24-hour news cycle, to the very speed at which we organize our lives. The ancient Greek Philosopher Epictetus once wrote, “You become what you give

your attention to.” In a world with increasing distraction, our inability to focus has many negative consequences, the biggest of which is the fallout within our souls. Distraction and hurry does violence to our souls. Attentiveness to God offers a way out of the frenetic pace in which we live. The first habit we cultivate in attentiveness is silence and solitude.

Watch this brief overview video and discuss.

**Watch Video 5 on Silence and Solitude at [cpc.org/resources](http://cpc.org/resources).**

It is difficult to find silence in our day. Technology, information, social media, pace of life, all of it conspires against our ability to be still and attentive to God. For many of us, the very idea of silence as a regular habit is a foreign concept, something that may even induce anxiety and stress. In the noisy world we call home, we are far more accustomed to hiding from silence than regularly embracing it.

- Do you naturally embrace silence? Or do you resist silence? If you embrace silence, what does that look like for you? If you resist silence, how do you typically resist?
- Discuss the role silence and solitude plays in our spiritual formation. How does it help us practice attentiveness to God in a world of distraction and hurry?
- Are silence and solitude already a regular part of your apprenticeship to Jesus? What does this look like for you? If not, why not? (Note: This question is not intended to shame anyone. The goal is to create space for honest and open discussion, respecting where each person may be in their journey.)

## **STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)**

**Lead the below study and discussion for your group. You can either read it in its entirety or put it in your own words.**

As we begin this study, have three different people read the verses below.

Person #1 - Matthew 14:13

Person #2 - Mark 1:35

Person #3 - Luke 5:16

Notice that each of the synoptic gospels intentionally depicted the regular rhythm in which Jesus would withdraw into silence/solitude throughout his ministry. The English phrase “solitary place” is from the Greek word ἔρημος = erémos (er'-ay-mos). And it means solitary place or wilderness. As you study the life of Jesus, you will notice that one of his favorite places was the erémos. Jesus would regularly withdraw from the crowds to be attentive to God alone, escaping the noise and distraction of his daily living. It is in the erémos that Jesus reconnects with God.

The need for a regular habit of silence and solitude is not a random or arbitrary discipline; it is a discipline that the church has cultivated for hundreds of years. As apprentices of Jesus, we must learn this skill of an erémos rhythm—a place and a time to regularly escape the busy, noisy, overly hurried life—if we are to cultivate a life rhythm of attentiveness to God. Our job in being attentive to Jesus is to come to realize the habits of Jesus and contextualize and integrate them into our everyday lives.

- What does Jesus’ erémos rhythm model for us in our relationship with God? What does it model in his relationship with others?
- What pressures or expectations did Jesus face in





creating an erémos rhythm in his own life? What impact did this habit have on the life of Jesus?

- What challenges do you face in carving out time for silence and solitude (e.g., busy schedule, responsibilities in caring for others, phone notifications, work, etc.)? What impact would a regular habit of silence/solitude cultivate in your life?

Have someone else read **Psalm 16** out loud to the group.

There are three clear distinctions in David's Psalm 16, vv. 1-4, 5-8, and 9-11, each building on the other. Let's look at each section in turn.

### **Psalm 16:1-4**

David opens with a declaration of God as the place of safe refuge. The chaos of David's life contrasted with the faithfulness of God's presence has demonstrated that over time God is the place David must turn. In verses 3-4, David contrasts those who have run to God for refuge versus those who run to other competing gods to seek refuge. For David and us, our refuge is in running to Yahweh. While the "gods" of our day may look different, it is easy for us to "pour out libations" (David's way of saying make sacrifices to) to the gods of productivity, distraction, and entertainment. None of those are inherently bad, but they will never provide the refuge that our souls desire and must find in God alone.

### **Psalm 16:5-8**

In contrast to those chasing other gods, David asserts his faith, "Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure." I am reminded of the relationship Jesus describes with God the father in John 5:19, "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does." As apprentices of Jesus, we are learning from Jesus how to live in this same constant connection to him. The declaration of faith leads us to the question, "how"? How do we step into the intimacy of Jesus' relationship with God or David's relationship with God? The answer comes in Psalm 16:8, "I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken." It is only through constant attentiveness and connection to God that we are able to weather the storms of life

### **Psalm 16:9-11**

What is the result of David's intentional attentiveness to God? "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure," (v. 9). For most of us, the opposite of this is true. Our hearts are restless, our tongues spew cynicism, and our bodies are tired. In keeping God before us in regular silence and solitude, we become more attentive to the weariness of our own lives and attentive to God loving us in the midst of those aches.

- David's insistence on being present with God permeates this Psalm. How attentive to God do you feel throughout your regular days? Do you find your heart naturally flowing toward God in times of slowing, or do you tend to fill each moment of quiet with something?

So practically speaking, how do you and I "keep [our] eyes always on the Lord"? In a world built on distraction, noise, and hurry, our attention is constantly divided. But if we are to practice attentiveness to God, as David demonstrates here, we must counter the formative cultural habits of noise and hurry. In her immensely practical book *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, Adele Calhoun writes the following,

"The discipline of silence invites us to leave behind the competing demands of our outer world for time alone with Jesus. Silence offers a way of paying attention to the Spirit of God and what he brings to the surface of our souls...In quietness we often notice things we would rather not notice or feel. Pockets of sadness or anger or loneliness or impatience begin to surface."

- Spend some time as a group naming some of the "competing demands" that rob us of our ability to be alone with Jesus. How could bringing those before God, in silence, help shape you more toward Christlikeness?

One of the challenges of befriending silence is that as we settle into silence, it appears nothing is happening, and in some sense, that is correct. But in another sense, silence and solitude is a profound declaration of God's grace. In the seeming nothingness of silence, God is working. Not because of our efforts but merely because we show up, time after time, and enter the erémos, anticipating God moving in the weeks, months, and years of this habit. Slowly, over time, silence opens each dimension of the self (heart, soul, mind, and strength) and allows God to permeate those spaces as we come to dwell in God.

As we set out to practice attentiveness to God through silence and solitude this week in an attempt to “keep [our] eyes always on the Lord,” discuss your strategy for creating this habit. What will your erémos rhythm look like? When and where will you try to integrate this into your regular day? How will you handle digital distractions?

Encourage one another and creatively consider what it may look like with the particularities of each group member's stage of life, personality, daily rhythms, commitments, etc. It will look different for each of us. That is okay; be creative!

## **CLOSING EXERCISE (10 Minutes) | *Centering Prayer* (optional)**

To close, create some space for silence with God as a group. One practice that helps us develop this habit of silence and solitude with God is centering prayer, a traditional form of prayer that couples scripture meditation with prayer. The goal of centering prayer is not to clear our mind of all thoughts but rather to become aware of our thoughts and freely release them into God's loving hands. Centering prayer is a helpful way to draw our attention back to God in times of silence, especially when distractions arise.

For some members in your group, this will be the first time they are entering into an extended time of silence with God. It may be helpful to speak about how silence might feel awkward or even uncomfortable, especially in a group setting. Encourage your group with the truth that God is present in this space and that he desires to meet with us! This is a time to commune with him and rest in his presence.

Read through the following directions for centering prayer, adapted from the **Spiritual Disciplines Handbook**, before entering into a time of silence. Set a five-minute timer when you begin to be free from having to keep track of time.

1. Sit comfortably in a position that allows you to stay alert and attentive.

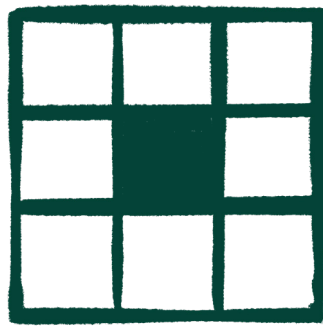
2. Read **Psalm 62:1** aloud together:

*Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken. Psalm 62:1-2*

3. Choose a word from the text that grabs your attention and expresses your desire for God. This word could reflect a desire of your heart (e.g., love, grace, peace, safety), or it might be a name, characteristic, or title of God (e.g., Jesus, great Shepherd, Counselor, Healer, Defender). Silently reflect on this word, allowing it to draw your attention to God and his presence.

4. Allow yourself to settle into the silence. It is not unusual for the first few moments to be filled with many noisy thoughts. Release these thoughts to God, and return your attention to him by repeating the word that stood out to you from the text. Take time to be with Jesus, and be still. There is no need to “do” or accomplish anything.

5. As you near the end of this time, offer yourself and your love to God. You might offer a simple phrase to God like “I am yours.” Don't rush out of this time of silence with God. Allow yourself to be still and wait in his presence. Ask God to help you remember the word that stood out to you from the passage as you move through the rest of your day.



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- Spend a few minutes debriefing this time in silence together.
  - What was this time in silence like for you?
  - Which word grabbed your attention?
  - How might the Holy Spirit have guided and spoken to you during this time?

## TAKE-HOME EXERCISE

*Simply read through the below exercise that each individual will do before your next gathering. Work through any questions people may have on what they are to do. Again it is about practice, not perfection. Give yourselves grace.*

Encourage your group to continue practicing centering prayer, as we just did together, on their own this week. The goal is to begin to develop and gradually incorporate the habit of silence and solitude with God into our regular daily and weekly rhythms. By intentionally creating space for silence, free from distraction and noise, we position ourselves to hear from him. We can offer all of who we are to God and, in doing so, open our lives to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.

1. Considering your stage of life and schedule, identify a time when you can spend five to ten minutes alone with God. Choose a comfortable place where you experience quiet with God, free from distractions. If it's helpful for you to be doing something with your hands, you could consider folding laundry, washing, ironing, or a similar simple task. Set a timer for five to ten minutes when you begin to be free from having to keep track of the time.
2. Select a verse or short passage of Scripture to focus on. Some suggestions might be a verse or passage in Isaiah 40, Psalm 63, Psalm 131, Psalm 46, Psalm 23, and Psalm 16.
3. Choose a word from the text that grabs your attention and expresses your desire for God. This word can reflect a desire of your heart (e.g., love, grace, peace, safety), or it might be a name, characteristic, or title of God (e.g., Jesus, Great Shepherd, Counselor, Healer, Defender). Silently reflect on this word, allowing it to draw your attention to God and his presence.
4. Allow yourself to settle into the silence. It is not unusual for the first few moments to be filled with many noisy thoughts. Release these thoughts to God, and return your attention to him by repeating the word that stood out to you from the text. Take time to just be with Jesus, listen for his voice, and be still. There is no need to “do” or accomplish anything.
5. As you near the end of this time, offer yourself and your love to God. You might offer a simple phrase

to God like “I am yours.” Don’t rush out of this time of silence with God. Allow yourself to be still and wait in his presence. Ask God to help you remember the word that stood out to you from the passage as you move through the rest of your day.

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER (2 minutes)**

Close by reading the below poem from Ted Loder’s book, *Guerillas of Grace*. Then spend a brief moment thanking God for your time together and pray for each other’s upcoming week.

### **Gather me to be with you Ted Loder, *Guerillas of Grace***

O, God, gather me now  
To be with you  
As you are with me.  
Soothe my tiredness;  
Quiet my fretfulness;  
Curb my aimlessness;  
Relieve my compulsiveness;  
Let me be easy for a moment.

O Lord, release me  
From the fears and guilts  
Which grip me so tightly;  
From the expectations and opinions  
Which I so tightly grip,  
That I might be open  
To receiving what you give,  
To risking something genuinely new  
To learning something refreshingly different.

O, God, gather me to be with you  
As you are with me. Amen.

# SESSION 2: HEALING BEYOND DISTRACTION



**Main Text:**  
1 Kings 19

**Take Home Exercise:**  
Silence

## OPENING EXERCISE (5 Minutes)

Lead your group through the below exercise.

Gather together as a community group in a comfortable setting—around a table, on a couch, on a living room floor, etc. Have someone lead a prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together as a group. Why silence? In our overcrowded, busy world, silence (even if only for a few minutes) cuts through the noise and allows space to calm your mind and heart before God.

Now, spend a minute or two in silence together. Instruct your group,

“As you sit in silence, invite the Holy Spirit to quiet your heart and mind from distractions. Ask God if there is anything he would like to share with you during this time.”

Close this group time of silence with a prayer of gratitude, thanking God for the opportunity to be together.

## OPENING DISCUSSION (20 Minutes)

Spend a few minutes debriefing the take-home exercise from your last gathering.

In our last meeting together, you were encouraged to intentionally create space in your regular rhythms for silence with God. Take some time to reflect and share about how this went. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- Were you able to identify a time and place to be silent with God?
- Describe your experience practicing centering prayer. What did you find encouraging about this time in silence? What was challenging?

In Ruth Haley Barton’s wonderful book, *Invitation to Silence and Solitude*, she discusses what she calls “the push-pull phenomenon” of silence and solitude. This phenomenon takes place when most of us live with such a busy pace of life and are flooded with distractions that we are pulled toward the concept of silence and solitude, but right when we come to the point of stepping into it, we push away out of fear, doubt, and/or resistance. Unfortunately, as we experience this push-pull phenomenon, we



resist the very thing our soul desperately needs to slow down and give our attentiveness back to God.

- In what ways might you have experienced this push-pull phenomenon? How do you find yourself resisting silence? How do you, intentionally or unintentionally, allow external noise (i.e., music, podcasts, TV, news, social media, etc.) to drown out or distract you from internal noise?

## STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

**Lead the below study and discussion for your group. You can either read it in its entirety, or put it in your own words.**

The natural disposition of our world is not toward stillness and slowing down. But the first step in growing in our apprenticeship to Jesus is the simple step of slowing, disconnecting from the noise, and opening up our lives to God by giving him our attentiveness. It is as David writes of God in Psalm 46, “Be still and know that I am God...”

**Watch video 6, Beholding God at [cpc.org/resources](http://cpc.org/resources).**

The first posture of the apprentice to Jesus is attentiveness. In creating space for silence and solitude, we create a sort of container into which all other spiritual disciplines and practices can enter. If we cannot grow in our attentiveness to God, we will stunt our growth in Christlikeness. Therefore, we must take seriously the invitation to slow down, disconnect from the noise and demands of our fast-paced world, and direct our whole selves toward God. We must learn to “be still and know that [he] is God.”

- Discuss the below quote from Dallas Willard that Kevin read in the video.

This is the fundamental secret of caring for our souls. Our part in practicing the presence of God is to direct and redirect our minds constantly to him. In the early time of our practicing, we may well be challenged by our burdensome habits of dwelling on things less than God. But these are habits, not the law of gravity, and can be broken. A new, grace-filled habit will replace the former ones as we take intentional steps toward keeping God before us. Soon our minds will return to God as the needle of a compass constantly returns to the north no matter how the compass is moved. If God is the great longing of our souls, he will become the polestar of our inward beings. Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission*

Have someone in your group turn to 1 Kings 19. Before reading the text out loud, a bit of context. In chapter 18, Elijah had just experienced a major win in his ministry. He had just called down fire from the Lord onto an altar to show God’s supremacy over the pagan gods of Baal. It was an epic scene where Elijah leaned into God, and God showed up in a big way. However, where we pick up, the scene has turned dramatically as his life is threatened as a result of the scene on Mount Carmel.

With that in mind, have someone in your group read 1 Kings 19:1-18 aloud.

What a fascinating and emotional story. Elijah is experiencing the fullest gamut of emotions. From the high of Mount Carmel to the lows of running for your life to the despair of depression. As Elijah flees into the wilderness, he enters into prayer with raw emotion. Look at 19:4b, “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” There is something in the raw honesty of Elijah at a moment of fear and pain that we often can relate to. But notice that God doesn’t respond then. He simply allows Elijah to rest, eat, and rest some more. God graciously allows Elijah to voice what he is feeling most acutely and provide what he needs in the moment.

- Imagine that you, like Elijah, are running off to be alone. What would you hope for God to offer you right now (e.g., food, rest, conversation, space to process honest



thoughts and feelings, wisdom, and guidance)?

Notice that before God speaks to Elijah, he provides food and rest for him and then leads him into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. Then after that long foray into the wilderness, we hear God speak. But the silence is broken in an unexpected way. In two places in the text (1 Kings 19:9 and 19:13), God asks Elijah a provocative question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” The question is not one of chastisement but one of genuine inquiry. It is a question God is using to provoke Elijah to look inward as to how he arrived at the moment that he finds himself in. God is drawing Elijah back to become attentive to his own personal state of being as well as draw his attentiveness to himself.

- Why might God, who is all-knowing, ask, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” What might be the significance of God asking Elijah this question twice?

- If you slowed down long enough to listen to your own heart, how would you answer this question if God asked you, “What are you doing here, \_\_\_\_\_?”

- What does God’s voice being in the gentle whisper, rather than in the wind, earthquake, and fire, reveal about God? About the way he communicates with us? About how we might position ourselves to hear from him?

Elijah’s inward healing came on the other side of distraction. As we have seen in the story, Elijah’s great success was followed by a season of fear, doubt, and distraction. Elijah was caught looking for God in the wind, the earthquake, and the fire. But it wasn’t until after Elijah dealt with those distractions that he found the voice of God in the “gentle whisper.” One of the reasons we often resist entering silence and solitude is because we fear what we will find in our own souls. This fear leads us to complacency and the embrace of distractions over opening our souls to God. Distraction becomes the place we live out of fear of facing the brokenness within us. But like Elijah’s story, healing often comes on the other side of distraction.

- Consider your own life. How do you embrace distraction and busyness in ways that prevent you from entering into the deeper recesses of your soul? Has distraction and busyness become a guard you use to avoid your own brokenness?

- Discuss ways that giving your attentiveness to God through the habit of silence might bring healing beyond distraction.

## **CLOSING EXERCISE (10 Minutes) - SILENCE (Optional)**

**Lead your group through the below exercise. Feel free to read it straight through as a guide or change it into your own words for your group setting.**

To close, spend the next 5 minutes together in silence with God. As we saw in the passage we just read, God reveals himself to us and graciously instructs us in silence. Through intentionally creating space for silence, we can position ourselves to closely listen to God’s voice and receive what he desires to share with us. We are free to spend time simply resting in God and enjoying his presence.

The goal of this practice is simply that—to rest in God and enjoy his presence. There is nothing that needs to be accomplished during this time. Read through the following instructions with the group and see if any questions arise. Remember that instructions are meant to be a guide rather than a checklist or assignment. There is no need to rush to get through it all.

Consider having your group spread out around the room you are meeting in. It may be helpful if each person in the group has a small notecard (a piece of paper or a journal are also fine) and a pen. Pray for your group and invite God to meet with you during this time. Then set a timer for five minutes and begin. At the end of the five minutes, give your group an extra minute or so to regather as a group.

1. Settle In (1 Minute)

Find a comfortable position and allow your body and mind to settle as you take a few deep, slow breaths.

How do you feel about taking this time to meet with the Lord in silence? What are you bringing or carrying with you into this time? Honestly process those feelings with him and release those worries into his loving hands.

Choose a simple word or phrase that expresses your desire for God. Such as “Here I am, God.” Repeat this simple prayer a few times, following the cadence of your breath.

## 2. Remember God’s Presence (1 Minute)

Remember that God is present with you and desires to meet with you. Choose a scripture verse you can easily meditate on (repeat in your mind) to help focus your thoughts and turn your attention to God. Psalm 46:10, Psalm 23:1, or Psalm 145:18 are a few you could consider.

Ask God to help you become aware of him and hear his voice amidst all the distractions. Ask him to help you rest in him. Prayerfully repeat the verse you were previously meditating on or even a short phrase like “Come, Lord Jesus, come.”

## 3. Rest and Listen (2 Minutes)

Rest in God’s presence, remembering his love and compassion for you. Resist the urge to do anything or control this time in silence. Allow yourself to just be with God and enjoy his company. If your mind starts to wander, graciously direct your thoughts back to God, perhaps by bringing to mind the same scripture verse from before.

What might God be saying to you? What is he bringing to mind? Is there anything he is inviting you to surrender to him? Is there anything he might be prompting you to do?

Your mind will likely race toward important tasks you’ve forgotten or need to do. This is normal! You can jot down those items on a sheet of paper, or a small notecard, as they come to mind so that you don’t dwell on them. However, avoid making a to-do list. As the distractions come, it might be helpful to acknowledge them and let them go like clouds floating across the sky or boats floating down a river. Repeat the short prayerful phrases or verses above as needed.

## 4. Close With Gratitude (1 Minute)

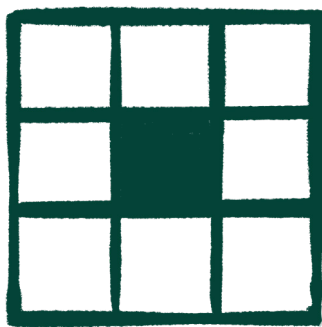
Thank God for this time with him. Ask him to help you remain aware of his presence as you move through the rest of the day.

Debrief this experience as a group, using the following reflection questions to guide your discussion.

- How were you feeling entering into this time of silence with the Lord?
- How did God meet you during this time? What did he bring to mind?
- What was encouraging about this time in silence?
- What was challenging about this time?

## **TAKE-HOME EXERCISE (5 Minutes)**

**Read through the below exercise that each individual will do before your next gathering. Work through any questions people may have on what they are to do. Again, it is about practice (not perfection), so give yourselves grace.**



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Below is a practice that everyone in your group can try out before the next meeting. Spend a few minutes reading this out loud with the group and discuss any questions that may arise. Encourage your group members to “try on” this habit of silence and solitude for 5-10 minutes, 3-4 days a week. It will be best to find a time and quiet place that personally works best for each person and their current schedule and season of life. Consider what it will look like to set aside distractions, perhaps even keeping cell phones, laptops, and work in another room.

This time of silence will look very similar to what we just practiced together as a group. Remember that the goal of this particular practice is to cultivate more intentional time to be silent before the Lord, turning our attention toward him and enjoying his presence. There is nothing to do during this time, and no need to stick to or rush through the following instructions—simply rest and be still before God.

#### Settle In (1 Minute)

Find a comfortable position and allow your body and mind to settle as you take a few deep, slow breaths.

How do you feel about taking this time to meet with the Lord in silence? What are you bringing/carrying with you into this time? Honestly process those feelings with him, and release those worries into his loving hands.

Choose a simple word or phrase that expresses your desire for God, like: “Here I am, God.” Repeat this simple prayer a few times, following the cadence of your breath.

#### Remember God's Presence (1-2 Minutes)

Remember that God is present with you and desires to meet with you. Choose a scripture verse that you can easily meditate on (repeat in your mind) to help focus your thoughts and turn your attention to God. Psalm 46:10, Psalm 23:1, Psalm 145:18, and Psalm 62:1 are a few you could consider.

Ask God to help you become aware of him and hear his voice amidst all the distractions. Ask him to help you rest in him. Prayerfully repeat the verse you were previously meditating on or even a short phrase like “Come, Lord Jesus, come.”

#### Rest and Listen (2-6 Minutes)

Rest in God's presence, remembering his love and compassion for you. Resist the urge to do anything or control this time in silence. Allow yourself to just be with God and enjoy his company. If your mind starts to wander, graciously direct your thoughts back to God, perhaps by bringing to mind the same scripture verse from before.

What might God be saying to you? What is he bringing to mind? Is there anything he is inviting you to



surrender to him? Is there anything he might be prompting you to do?

Your mind will likely race toward important tasks you've forgotten or need to do. This is normal! You can jot down those items on a sheet of paper, or a small notecard, as they come to mind so that you don't dwell on them. However, avoid making a to-do list. As the distractions come, it might be helpful to acknowledge them and let them go like clouds floating across the sky or boats floating down a river. Repeat the short prayerful phrases or verses above as needed.

Close With Gratitude (1 Minute)

Thank God for this time with him. Ask him to help you remain aware of his presence as you move through the rest of the day.

## **CLOSE IN PRAYER (2 Minutes)**

**Take a moment, as you close, to thank God for this time together as a group and pray for each other's upcoming week. Close with the following prayer.**

"O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

(from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer)