



# Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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## The Noise of Silence

Sometimes, reality is so illogical. The truth of this became evident one night with the arrival of a late-hour email asking a rhetorical question. It simply read, "Why is silence so noisy sometimes?" The email came from a newly divorced mother of a young child. She was spending the night alone while her daughter visited her father. As she sat in silence, she found the lack of "people noise" unusual and unsettling.

While many of us would eagerly welcome a little more peace and quiet, we recognize that silence has the unique potential to unlock the door to many different types of uncomfortable "noise". To those of us in modern society who have become accustomed to a fairly consistent influx of noise, the absence of sound is a rarity that leaves us with ringing ears.

But what could make silence so "noisy" for a woman sitting alone at home? Let's consider a few possibilities.

First, silence at home can actually create an opportunity for us to hear strange, new noises in the house. These unfamiliar sounds can grow in significance and generate a fearful sense of vulnerability and insecurity.

Second, the silence experienced when alone often conveys a clear, poignant message that might otherwise be avoided - "You are alone!" The message is not heard with the ears, but with the heart. It is heard with volume and repetition that increases its impact. Rather than being a simple statement of fact, the message can convey, with emotional intensity, an empty heart's cry for companionship.

Third, the silence experienced when alone creates space in our heads for the noisy din of our own thoughts and feelings. The voices in our head may join together to create a chorus of question, accusation, regret, and despair. Sadly, any inner voice of encouragement or optimism is usually drowned out in the process and provides little relief from the onslaught.

Understandably, efforts to manage this noise abound, though they all typically share one common goal - escape! Some of us seek to escape the noise by retreating into sleep - not refreshing sleep, but "take me away" sleep. Others of us turn to alcohol or drugs, hoping to muffle the noise by dulling our thinking. Still others seek

out external noise to fill the ears and distract attention from the head noise.

There are, however, better options. To begin with, it's important that we develop a friendship with ourself. It is interesting how many of us say intensely hurtful things to ourself that we would never say to a friend. So rather than being our harshest critic, it is important that we recognize our value, be patient with our flaws and failures, and actively learn and grow through our life experiences.

Second, let's respect and appreciate the part of ourself that desires connection with other people. Rather than viewing it as a weakness or inadequacy, let's recognize that our desire for relationship reflects the very nature of our God.

Third, let's dare to reach out. While being open to contact from others, let's also initiate contacts. Alone time needs to be balanced with meaningful interactions with others.

As we develop in these ways, we may just discover that silence, rather than producing "noisy" pain, promotes peace, production, and renewal. This is an exchange worth making!



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## CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

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## Spirituality and Silence

He was only a young boy when he heard his name called during the quiet of the night. While it took the wisdom of an old man to open his mind to what was happening, Samuel eventually answered the call and took the opportunity to interact directly with his God. (I Sam. 3)

Silence and spirituality are often linked. Our Lord encourages us to openly express ourself to Him, but also to "be still [from our frantic efforts] and know that I am God." (Ps. 46:10) He speaks to us in a "still small voice" (I Kings 19:1-12), the quiet voice of the Spirit within us.

For our part, we have choices to make.

- Will we speak or listen during our silence? Will we express ourselves to God, or listen for His voice?
- Will we worry in silence, or wait with patience, trusting the wisdom and working of God?
- Will we wrestle with God, seeking answers and understanding, or worship Him, recognizing His love and authority?
- Will we ask to receive, plead for others, or give thankful praise?

The spiritual opportunities of silence are rich and varied. But beware! The devil, the great accuser, loves to fill our silence with his character attacks and the temptation to doubt, fear, and despair. So, know the truth of who you are, whose you are, who really is in control, and how much you are truly loved.

In doing so, you will transform the noise of silence into the music of peace.



"God is the friend of silence. See how nature - trees, flowers, grass - grows in silence; see the stars, the moon, and the sun, and how they move in silence ... we need silence to be able to touch souls."

- Mother Theresa