

Silence

The Desert Fathers went to great lengths to find silence. How can modern Christians incorporate more silence into their lives?

First I would like to say that often when people talk about practices that are acknowledged to be very good, yet poorly practised it is common to think that bigger is better, or more is better. Silence is good but God has called us to works prepared for us. It is unhealthy to spend a long time in silence – you will just end up daydreaming and no good will come of that!

One cannot just jump into silence. The mind, and the spirit, need to be prepared. One of the best ways to prepare is to refrain from excessive talking, also doing manual work – I find this particularly helpful. It takes time to slow down and a time of silent communion with God should be prepared for.

Ways to spend time in quiet for 10 minutes:

Watch a candle flicker in the dark (the darkness helps remove distractions!)

Be aware of your breathing

Look at a religious picture (Calvinists might not like this)

After reading a parable or short gospel section picture the scene.

The main benefit of silence is closer communion with God: a greater sensitivity to his guidance and deeper communion.

My experience with silence.

Good

Sometimes I have sought and found an answer from God on a particular subject through waiting in God in quiet. I would spend 10-30 minutes a day in quiet for about a week, each time just quietly waiting in faith that God will speak in his own time. After about a week some new truth often opened up to me.

Bad

Sometimes I went a bit over the top with silence. There were several things in my life that I needed help with and so I sought silence to hear guidance from God. For several years I spent nearly all my spare time in quiet in my room (often 3 hours a day) to keep my mind quiet. I was so desperate that I would get annoyed when people talked to me and ended up being quite rude and abrupt – not exactly what God intended!