

Silence and Solitude

March

Silence and solitude are related practices aimed at clearing away distractions in our life so we might be more attentive to God. These disciplines can curb our addictions to busyness, productivity, being seen by others, connection to information, entertainment, and control. They can create opportunity for slowing, listening to God, reflection, and rest. They directly contend with the way power, influence, and self-worth play out in many of our workplaces.

Create a number of ways to pursue silence and solitude this month, being purposeful about how and why you do so. Experiment. Pursue the practices beyond what your comfort and appetite for them might dictate. Reflect throughout the month on your experience, noting what you enjoy about these times and what makes them difficult. Know that many other Christians around the world give focused attention to silence and solitude with you during the season of Lent; you will not wrestle with silence alone.

Below are practices to engage this month, but make sure to include *at least one half-day* in silence and solitude as a way to unplug from other routines.

- Take at least one lunch per week in a quiet place without your computer, phone, or other items that might distract or comfort you. Simply be quiet and still in solitude.
- Commute without music, radio, or podcasts.
- Start the morning with three minutes of silence at the beginning of the month. Try to add a minute to this every few days.
- Engage an activity you would normally do with others by yourself (a meal out, a movie, etc.). Reflect on your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions that come up while doing a commonly communal activity alone.
- Walk or exercise without music.
- Unplug from the television, phone, and computer for an entire night per week after work.
- Get away from artificial sounds and into nature.
- Take a half-day, day, or weekend dedicated to a silent retreat away from others. Consider doing this midweek as a vacation day. Research retreat centers that allow guests to visit for day retreats in silence; contact them ahead of time regarding availability and costs. Spiritual directors in your area can likely help you with recommended locations.