

Why Solitude and Silence Are So Important

What if I asked you, “So, what have you been doing?” And you respond by saying, “Oh, nothing at all. I really wish I had something to do.”

Of course, no one would respond that way. Instead, you’d probably say something like, “I’m really overwhelmed right now. It’s crazy. I’m so busy.”

If so, you’re not alone. I can’t recall a time recently when I’ve spoken with someone who didn’t tell me how busy they were with work, with kids or with life.

If we aren’t careful, constant busyness will ultimately lead us to a searing desert where joy evaporates and emptiness fills our lives and relationships. But solitude and silence are an oasis where living water will refresh the scorched soul and renew the muddled mind.

At least once a year, I retreat to an “oasis” for reflection, refreshment and renewal. I find a place somewhere outside our home where I can spend the day alone, just me and God, without any connection to the outside world.

In the past, I’ve gone to places like a secluded beach, a quiet park or a friend’s condo. I sometimes bring some uplifting music. I often bring a pen and pad of paper to jot down what I’m learning. And I always bring my Bible, which pours living water into my soul.

From my experience, solitude and silence can do at least five things:

- 1. Solitude and silence can make you feel helpless.** When you’re alone and not “doing,” you start thinking about how

little control you ultimately have, and ever had, over just about everything that's important—your spouse, your kids, your work. Now, I'm not suggesting that we can't control how we behave—the way we treat our spouse, how we raise our kids or how we lead at work. I'm just saying that I can't ultimately control the outcome or results. We can't control someone else's heart and mind, and we can't control all of our circumstances. Only God can do that.

2. Solitude and silence can force you to address issues you'd rather avoid. When you stop and think, the root cause of your horrific marriage problems might become clearer. A retreat can also give you time to grieve a great loss—the loss of your parents, your child, your friend.

3. Solitude and silence can help you reflect upon your life. The purpose here is not to dwell on your mistakes that have been forgiven. The reason for this time is for you to think about, with true humility, any changes that need to be made in your life, not someone else's, from this day forward.

4. Solitude and silence can allow you to do some deep thinking and help focus your mind and heart on what's truly important. Loving God and loving others—your spouse, your children, your family, your friends, your enemies—should be at the very top of your list of what really matters.

5. Solitude and silence can be the wellspring of hope in your life. I'm not suggesting every time you spend this time alone that your life will drastically change. But I am saying that this time can restore, renew and re-energize you toward a life of meaning and purpose.

Do you spend any time in solitude and silence? If so, what has been your experience?

For the original article, visit . Mark Merrill is the

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