





**REVIEW**

John Mark said when he’s burdened with busyness, whether at work or in his family, the last thing on his mind is practicing silence or solitude. **What priorities keep you too busy to practice silence and solitude?**

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John Mark explained that there are two kinds of silence: internal and external. External silence is the absence of noise—no music, roommates, or TV in the background. **What do you think makes external silence hard to find?**

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In many cases, God’s voice is a whisper, not a shout, which makes hearing him over the loudness of our secular, urban, digital lives more difficult. **What noise in your life makes it difficult to focus? How does a lack of focus affect your time with God?**

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Television, social media, and podcasts keep our minds running even when we’re physically resting. **What could it look like for you to limit things like TV and social media when you have downtime?**

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**What are some other ways you could turn down the noise in your life? What specific effects would silence have on your prayers, meditation, or ability to hear God’s voice?**

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John Mark described internal silence as being able to quiet the thoughts, worries, and questions rolling around in our minds. But silence can be difficult to find when our hearts and minds feel troubled. Even in short prayers, it can be difficult to remain focused on God without thinking about errands that need to be run and emails that need our attention. **What would make internal silence difficult for you to pursue?**

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The “what ifs” of life can cause anxiety and restlessness, contributing to our lack of internal silence. **Historically, how has worry had an impact on your ability to rest? What kind of questions or regrets do you ruminate over regularly?**

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Solitude isn’t the same as loneliness or isolation. Solitude is a chosen separation from busyness so that you can be quiet in the presence of God. **What has quality time with God typically looked like for you?**

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**BIBLE EXPLORATION**

Everything on our to-do list can feel equally important and it can be difficult to gauge what is most important. In the book of Mark, we see Jesus being busy while prioritizing time alone. Read Mark 1:29–37.

This passage describes a busy day in Jesus’s life. He was slammed with demands on his time, essentially working all day. And the very next morning, his disciples found him and wanted to add more to his plate (1:37). **Why do you think Jesus had to leave the house to find quiet time?**

It seems counterintuitive, but the more in demand Jesus was the more he withdrew in prayer. **What can we learn from Jesus about taking time away from the demands of life? What benefits could withdrawal and prayer have in your life, especially when you feel slammed with responsibilities?**

The way we spend our time in solitude is critically important. **What could you do with your time alone to foster your relationship with Jesus? What would it look like to build more of this time into your weekly schedule?**

Overworking can be a sign of internal unrest. How will we pay a certain bill, finish a complicated project, or impress our boss if we spend less time working? But, in the end, overworking is just a way of trying to take what God controls into our own hands. Read Matthew 6:25–34.

This passage reminds us God will provide for us in the same way that he provides for the birds of the sky. You are worth more to him than the birds—he will take care of you. **What needs are you afraid won’t be met if you take time to be alone with God? What could it look like for you to trust him more in that particular area of your life?**

Sometimes we fill our schedules leaving no room for rest because we’re afraid that if we don’t do enough, we won’t have enough. **How often do you experience worry? What steps do you take to eliminate or cope with anxious thoughts?**

As Christians, we must remember that no matter the amount of work we put in, God is the one who gives us what we need. Overworking only reveals the level of our

Horizontal lines for writing answers.

trust in him. **What would it look like to trust God when you feel like you aren't being productive? What steps could you take to trust God with your rest?**

**What could it look like for you to bring all your anxious thoughts to God this week?**

## **LAST WORD**

Sitting in silence allows us to not only address our overdependence on productivity but also gives us a chance to spend time in God's presence. Our relationship with God flourishes with quality time, just like our relationships with friends and family do.

Remember John Mark's advice to start where you are, not where you feel like you should be. This week, if all you can manage is five minutes when you first wake up, start there and watch what God does with your time.

## **DEEPER WALK**

**Read:** Read the chapter "Silence and Solitude" in Part Three of John Mark's book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*.

**Pray:** Choose a particular time of the day that works best and pray in a secluded place. Pray and ask God to help you find ways to spend time with him more often.

**Meditate:** Practice silence and solitude this week by picking a short passage of Scripture to meditate on like Matthew 6:25–34 or Mark 1:29–37. Meditate on the passage repeatedly during your quiet time throughout the week.

**Memorize:** Memorize Mark 1:35, "In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there."