



## \* **“THE COURAGE TO BE QUIET”**

**Biblical Text:** Ephesians 1:15-23

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We’ve been talking about how to hit “*pause*” in our busy lives and “refuel” our life spiritually. The goal, of course, is to prevent or recover from *\*“running on empty!”\**

Specifically, we’ve been looking at three simple, but very difficult, steps which are recommended by a guy named Doug Fields, *\*“Stop, Be Quiet, Make a Connection.”\**<sup>1</sup>

Most of us learned how to be quiet in childhood. *\*I can’t remember what age I would have been the first time I learned the universal sign for “be quiet.” \*Shhh... Can you? Of course, it is just easier for some of you than others of us.*

I also lost track of how many times I got in trouble for talking in class when I should have been listening. *\* Or the first time I heard a teacher say “Michael, it’s time to use our inside voice instead of our outdoors voice, remember?” Or the first time my mother quoted the book of Ecclesiastes to me. Which says, \**“To everything there is a season ... there is a time to be silent and a time to speak.”* (Ecclesiastes 3:7)<sup>2</sup>*

It’s a relevant verse for today. *\*Quiet is hard.* For all of us. Some, primarily extroverts, just talk, or post, or tweet, our way through life. The term *\*“over-share”* was invented for people like us. Previous generations used photo albums, home movies, or an endless supply of video. Now we have *\*twitter and Facebook.*

But anyone who has been to Vacation Bible School knows how to quiet us down. *\* I learned it here at VBS and our kids know it, right? \*It’s called “five up high.” I’m not sure that it will work on presidential over-tweeting, but it might be worth a try. \**

And it’s not like others of us, who are less likely to be heard or overshare lead quiet lives either. *\*There are endless conversations and emotions speaking inside our own minds. And it can be really noisy there. \*So, not only is quiet hard, it is rare.*

But the Bible is right. *\*“There is a time to be silent....”*<sup>3</sup> And we need it. Since it is Valentine’s Day this week (*guys this is your 48 hour warning! \**) I thought I’s share a couple of Scriptures that apply to our relationships. There’s this one, from *\*James 1:19: “Dearly beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.”*<sup>4</sup> Trust me, that’s good advice!

<sup>1</sup> Fields, Doug. *Refuel: An Uncomplicated Guide to Connecting with God.* Copyright © 1973 Thomas Nelson. Hardcover Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:7. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by [Biblica, Inc.](#) All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Ecclesiastes 3:7.

<sup>4</sup> James 1:19, paraphrased by the author.

Or, if you are like me this one is even better advice: \**“Whoever guards their mouth and tongue will stay out of trouble.”*<sup>5</sup> That’s Proverbs 21:23. And it is hard work!

\*Our temptation is to escalate conversations and arguments, to talk more not less. Listening is a rare. So much so that in politics, public discourse, social media and even in conversations, we often just shout at one another across the fence.

We could do worse than follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Over and again in contentious situations, he refused to engage in name calling or defensiveness with his critics. He \**“kept silent...” “He did not answer...” “even ... a single charge.”* Instead, in Matthew Mark, Luke and John, he amazed his accusers so even \**“...Pilate was amazed...”* that he *“...gave no answer...”* even when *“questioned ... at length.”*<sup>6</sup>

He knew \**“there is a time to be silent and a time to speak.”*<sup>7</sup>

He spoke some of the most powerful words in human history. Check out the *Sermon on the Mount* in Matthew 4-6. Gandhi called them the greatest words ever spoken.

Or consider his eloquent words, applicable to our culture, from Matthew 25:40, about our welcome and care for the poor, dispossessed and refugees, whom he called the *“least of these.”* Remember his words? He said, \**“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”*<sup>8</sup>

But we also know about Jesus’ spiritual habits. Mark 1:35 tells us, \**“Early in the morning, while it was still dark, He got up, and made His way to a quiet place to pray.”*<sup>9</sup> Silence is not only golden. It is essential for our connection with God.

So, I want to try an experiment. When I ask, I want you to close your eyes. I’m going ask us, including me, to be quiet for one minute – no cheering! Here’s the experimental part. I want you to raise your hand when you think one minute has elapsed. But, no fair peeking at your phone, or counting in your head! OK?

So, I’ll just signal *“five up high”* and we’ll close our eyes have total quiet, and you raise your hand when you think we’ve reached the one minute mark. **Got it? Go!** \*

OK – open your eyes - how did that feel? Awkward, wasn’t it? Even for me. We kept waiting for someone to say something. Moments of silence feel like eternities to us. But here’s the thing. It is in the silence where we are mostly likely to hear God.

<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 21:23, paraphrased by the author from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 26:63, Mark 14:61, Matthew 27:14, Mark 15:5, John 19:9, Luke 23:9 in various translations.

<sup>7</sup> Op. Cit. Ecclesiastes 3:7. *New International Version Bible.*

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Matthew 25:40. *New International Version Bible.*

<sup>9</sup> Mark 1:35, adapted from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB) Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville Tennessee. All rights reserved.

\*And here's my theory about at least my being uncomfortable with silence: we are afraid to be quiet because when we are, it means we are not speaking. And when we are not speaking, that means we are not in control. And that's hard for most of us.

When we fill our lives with noise, or words, we leave little room for God or for his Word. Consider the prayer from Ephesians 1, our text for today. I am convinced that it is full of what we need most to navigate the challenges of our time and our personal lives. But if the only time we listen to them is once a week, if that, they probably are not the words we will listen to most. **Look at verses 17, 18 and 19:**

\* *"I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ ... may give you a **spirit of wisdom.**"*

\* *"So that ... you may know what is the **hope** to which he has called you."*

\* *"And what is the **immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe...**"*

Is there anyone here who does not need more wisdom, hope or spiritual power? Of course, we need those things, especially given the challenges of our time. But we are not likely to find them on our own. We need some time with the Master.

Look at the reminders in **verses 20, 21, and 22:**

\* *"God has put his power to work in Christ ... far above all **earthly rule, authority, power, and dominion.**"* His power is greater than any earthly power or ruler.

\* *"And he has put all things under his feet and made him the **head over all things...**"<sup>10</sup>*

All things! And he says that's something that we in the Church, the followers of his Son, know that others don't necessarily know! And it is the Good News!

\*In other words, we can have MBA from Harvard, have over-achieving kids, drive cars that cost more than our first house, wear clothes that cost more than our first car, we can even trick ourselves into believing we're in control, but in the end, we're not.

If you want to go deeper spiritually, the first step is to acknowledge that only God is God. Our government is not. Our currency is not. Even our kids, good as they are, are not. Only God is God. Know that, trust that, and nothing can take it away!

And the first and hardest step of knowing that is this one! To be quiet for once. To still the inner and outer conversations. And know that God is God. There's an old Zen Buddhist saying that goes like this: *"Only speak if you can improve the silence."*

**I believe that it is in the quiet moments that we know God most deeply.**

So, let us pray.

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<sup>10</sup> References adapted from Ephesians 3:17-22. Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.