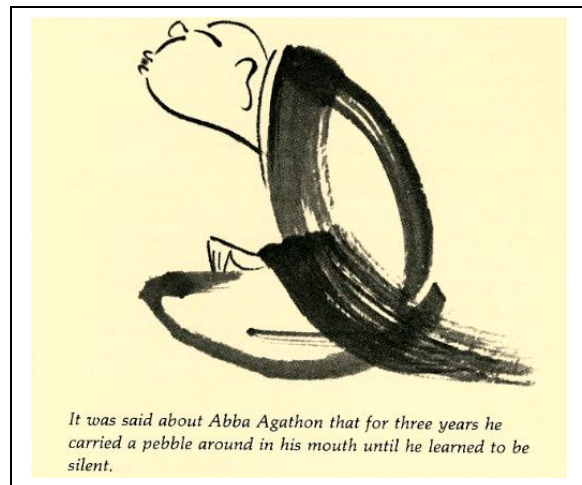


Nurturing Silence in a Noisy Heart.

Book by Wayne Oates, Notes by Steve Stuckey

Radio Telescopes that scan the heavens listening for the faint sounds of the universe are located in quiet and remote places in the world so that the noise of civilization will not interfere with their efforts to hear. So it is with us. The pace and noise of our world threatens to drown out any chance we have of hearing the still small voice of God. For centuries, Christians have understood that if they were to hear God's voice, they needed to make space in the lives to listen and quiet their restless, distracted hearts. Failure to nurture silence in a disciplined way can lead to disintegration of our souls. Depression, fatigue, faulty judgment, loss of perspective, loss of courage, confusion, superficiality, and ineffectiveness are potential results. Silence, on the other hand, is the growth of discernment as to what will have the focus of our attention, care, and commitment. Listed below are some reflective questions and suggestions on how you might nurture silence in your noisy heart

1. A noise is any sound that you do not want or that comes between you and something to which you have chosen to listen. Noise can refer to the volume of sound, such as a jet engine. It can refer to the annoyance level of sound- sounds you don't want to hear- and it can refer to the friction that other people cause you in daily life. Reflect on what might create noise in your own heart. Who creates the most uproar, confusion and stress in your world? What can you do to work in a quieter, less stressful way? What can you do to decrease the sensory overload of your life?.
2. What place and time are the quietest for you to experience silence in your regular day's routine? How can you protect those times for the things most important for you? For example, the first two hours of the morning are quiet ones for me. I try to avoid the radio, newspaper, or conversation during that time. During part of that time, I often read a devotional book or my Bible or just sit and enjoy the back yard.
3. To become the kind of person God wants us to be shaped by his Spirit and his Word, we must periodically free ourselves from the obligation of being the object of attention to others. His opinion of us is the one that matters the most in the end. We must learn to create a private world. The feeling of loneliness is often the doorway into that world. It takes courage to stand alone with God? When is the last time you felt lonely and what did you do about it? Were you able to use it as an opportunity to enter the presence of God?
4. Jesus invited his disciples to come away to a lonely place with him to rest awhile. He practiced the same discipline in his own life. What can



¹ The title and many of the ideas in the paper come from a book with the same title by Wayne Oates, Doubleday and Company, Inc, New York, 1979

you do on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis to enter that private world with Jesus? If you do not write it into your calendar, it will not happen. Recommendations for IVCF staff: set aside time when you are quiet before the Lord each day (e.g. morning or evening time), weekly time (one hour to review your week and pray and plan for the following week), monthly 6 hour retreat of silence, and 24-48 hours of silence reflection each quarter. This is not considered time off taken from your free time or vacation time. IVCF wants you to take this time and we will pay you for it. It is of first priority before all of your other ministry obligations.

5. We nurture silence when we try to focus upon doing one thing at a time. In the next week, what is the one most important thing you would like to do? How will you do that one thing?
6. Giving up the need to have the first and last word on every issue is the royal road to a quiet heart. When or with what topics do you feel you must have the last word?
7. Go for a day without speaking and see what it does to your other senses? Learn to experience and share another person's joy or sorrow simply by being with them rather than speaking words.
8. Is there a verse or passage of scripture that has become important to you? Memorize it and return to it often over the next month. A quiet heart is helped when we focus on a few verses of scripture at a time rather than many verses.
9. Do you allow time for silent reflection in the meetings you lead or are they one endless stream of jabbering?
10. Are you addicted to television, telephones, radio, or the stereo? What steps can you take to decrease your addiction?
11. Are you aware of the silent Presence of God in any personal way?