

Silent Times

by J.R. Miller

We need daily silent times to commune with God, renew our strength, and be transformed in character, in order to be effective in our service and live a prosperous, noble, enduring Christian life.

Scripture: Psalm 46:10, Matthew 11:28, Mark 6:31

Topics: "Spiritual Nourishment", "Silent Times"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the necessity of 'silent times' in the Christian life, where individuals can retreat from the busyness of daily activities to commune with God in prayer and meditation. He highlights that while active service is essential, it must be balanced with periods of devotion to sustain spiritual vitality. Miller encourages believers to establish daily quiet moments to recharge spiritually, drawing strength from God to effectively serve others. He warns against the dangers of relentless activity without spiritual nourishment, advocating for a life that integrates both devotion and duty. Ultimately, these silent times are crucial for personal growth and effective ministry.

Transcript

"Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." Mark 6:31

In Wellesley College, a special feature of the daily life of the household is the morning and evening "silent time." Both at the opening and closing of the day, there is a brief period, marked by the strokes of a bell, in which all the house is quiet. Every pupil is in her room. There is no conversation. No step is heard in the corridors. The whole great house with its thronging life--is as quiet as if all its hundreds of inhabitants were sleeping. There is no positively prescribed way of spending these silent minutes in the rooms--but it is understood that all whose hearts so incline them, shall devote the time to devotional reading, meditation, and prayer. At least, the design of establishing this period of quiet, as part of the daily life of the school, is to give opportunity for such devotional exercises, and by its solemn hush to suggest to all--the fitness, the helpfulness, and the need of such periods of communion with God. The bell that calls for silence, also calls to thought and prayer; and even the most indifferent must be affected by its continual recurrence.

Every true Christian life needs its daily "silent times," when all shall be still, when the busy activity of other hours shall cease, and when the heart, in holy hush, shall commune with God. One of the greatest needs in Christian life in these days, is more devotion. Ours is not an age of prayer so much as an age of work. The tendency is to action rather than to worship; to busy toil rather than to quiet sitting at the Savior's feet to commune with him. The key-note of our present Christian life is consecration, which is understood to

mean dedication to active service. On every hand we are incited to work. Our zeal is stirred by every inspiring incentive. The calls to duty come to us from a thousand earnest voices.

And this is well. There is little fear that we shall ever grow too earnest in working for our Master, or that our enthusiasm in his service shall ever become too intense. We are set on earth to toil for the world's good, and for God's glory. The day's heat is not to draw us from our active duty. Until death comes, as God's messenger to call us from toil--we are not to seek to be freed from Christian service. Devotion is not all--Peter wished to stay on the Mount of Transfiguration, to go back no more to the cold, sin-stricken world below; but no! Down at the mountain's base, human suffering and sorrow were waiting for the coming of the Healer, and the Master and his disciples must leave the rapture of heavenly communion, and hasten down to carry healing and comfort. It is always so. While we enjoy the blessedness of communion with God in the closet, there come in at our closed doors, and break upon our ears--the cries of human need and sorrow outside. Amid the raptures of devotion, we hear the calls of duty waiting without. We should never allow our ecstasies of spiritual enjoyment, to make us forgetful of the needs of others around us. Even the Mount of Transfiguration must not hold us away from ministry.

The truest pious life, is one whose devotion gives food and strength for service. The way to spiritual health, lies in the paths of consecrated activity. It is related in the legend of Francesca, that although she was unwearied in her devotions--yet if during her prayers she was summoned away by any domestic duty, she would close her book cheerfully, saying that a wife and a mother, when called upon, must leave her God at the altar--to find him in her domestic affairs.

Yet the other side is just as true. Before there can be a strong, vigorous, healthy tree, able to bear much fruit, to stand the storm, to endure the heat and cold--there must be a well-planted and well-nourished root. Likewise, before there can be a prosperous, noble, enduring Christian life in the presence of the world, safe in temptation, unshaken in trials, full of good fruits, perennial and unfading in its leaf--there must be a close walk with God in secret. We must receive from God, before we can give to others--for we have nothing of our own with which to feed men's hunger or quench their thirst. We are but empty vessels at the best, and must wait to be filled--before we have anything to carry to those who need. We must listen at heaven's gates--before we can go out to sing the heavenly songs in the ears of human weariness and sorrow. Our lips must be touched with a coal from God's altar--before we can become God's messengers to men. We must lie much upon Christ's bosom--before our poor earthly lives can be struck through with the spirit of Christ, and made to shine in the transfigured beauty of his blessed life. Devotion is never to displace duty--it often brings new duties to our hands--but it fits us for activity.

In order to this preparation for usefulness and service, we all need to get into the course of our lives many quiet hours, when we shall sit alone with Christ in personal communion with him, listening to his voice, renewing our wasted strength from his fullness, and being transformed in character by looking into his face. Busy men need such quiet periods of spiritual communion; for their days of toil, care, and struggle tend to wear out the fibre of their spiritual life, and exhaust their inner strength. Earnest women need such silent times, for there are many things in their daily domestic life and social life to exhaust their supplies of grace. The care of their children, the very routine of their home-life, the thousand little things that test their patience, vex their spirits, and tend to break their calm; the influences of much of their social life, with its manifold temptations to artificialness, insincerity, formality, unreality; or, on the other hand, to frivolity, idleness, vanity, and worldliness--amid all these distracting, dissipating, secularizing influences, every earnest woman needs to get into her life at least one quiet hour every day, when, like Mary, she can wait at the feet of Jesus, and have her own soul calmed and fed.

Preachers, teachers, Christian workers, all need the same. How can men stand in the Lord's house to speak his words to the people--unless they have first waited at Christ's feet to get their message? How can anyone teach the children the truths of life--without having been himself freshly taught of God? How can anyone bear heavenly gifts to needy souls--if he has not been at the Lord's treasure-house to get these gifts?

Phelps, in speaking of the danger of incessant Christian activity without a corresponding secret life with God, says, "The very obvious peril is, that the vitality of holiness may be exhausted by inward decay through the lack of an increase of its devotional spirit, proportioned to the expansion of its active forces. Individual experience may become shallow for the lack of meditative habits and much communion with God. Activity can never sustain itself. Withdraw the vital force which animates and propels it--and it falls like a dead arm. We cannot, then, too keenly feel, each one for himself, that a still and secret life with God must energize all holy duty, as vigor in every fibre of the body must come from the strong, calm, faithful beat of the heart."

A Christian man of intense business enterprise and activity was laid aside by sickness. He who never would intermit his labors was compelled to come to a dead halt. His restless limbs were stretched motionless on the bed. He was so weak that he could scarcely utter a word. Speaking to a friend of the contrast between his condition now, and when he had been driving his immense business, he said, "Now I am growing. I have been running my soul thin by my activity. Now I am growing in the knowledge of myself and of some things which most intimately concern me." No doubt there are many of us who are running our souls thin by our incessant action, without finding quiet hours for feeding and waiting upon God.

Blessed, then, is sickness or sorrow or any experience--that compels us to stop, that takes the work out of our hands for a little season, that empties our hearts of their thousand cares, and turns them toward God to be taught of him.

But why should we wait for sickness or sorrow to compel into our lives these necessary quiet hours? Would it not be far better for us to train ourselves to go apart each day for a little season from the noisy, chilling world--to look into God's face and into our own hearts, to learn the things we need so much to learn, and to draw secret strength and life from the fountain of life in God?

With these sacred "silent times" in every day of toil and struggle, we shall be always strong, and "prepared unto every good work." Waiting thus upon God, we shall daily renew our wasted strength, and be able to run and not be weary, to walk and not be faint, and to mount up with wings as eagles in bold spiritual flights.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jr-miller/silent-times/>

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