

# Congregational Silence

by Max Reich

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*Max Reich emphasizes the profound significance of congregational silence in fostering honesty, reverence, and receptivity to God.*

**Topics:** "Marriage Relationships", "Christian Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher delves into the concept of bitterness in relationships, particularly focusing on marriages. He emphasizes the dangers of harboring bitterness towards one's spouse, highlighting the need for husbands to avoid being ill-tempered, harsh, or resentful towards their wives. The preacher stresses the importance of love, kindness, and mutual submission in marriage, urging couples to work on their relationship with God and each other. Various biblical commentators and illustrations are used to underscore the significance of maintaining a loving and respectful attitude within marriage, rather than allowing bitterness to poison the relationship.

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## Transcript

There are found in not a few places, groups of sincere disciples of the Lord Jesus who meet together without prearrangement or human leadership, but in silence, unless moved otherwise, in subjection to the headship of Christ, whom they recognize as "in the midst."

This might seem a foolish and unprofitable proceeding to many, so I desire briefly to point out the four-fold significance of congregational silence as it appears to me. There is first

### THE SILENCE OF REALITY

If a meeting is spiritually poor, dull and empty, it is certainly more honest to be silent before God than to cover up the inward nakedness by a multiplicity of creaturely exercises. The silence is an eloquent appeal to the Source from which our help comes to overflow into our empty cups. For we cannot give what we have not got. He says: "I create the fruit of the lips." And the Psalmist says: "Open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise." It is not honest to give expression to exalted sentiments which are contradicted by one's actual condition. To sing of mountain-top joys, when actually in the valley; of the banquet, when starving in a parched desert: of glorious liberty, when in reality in bondage to the lusts and cares of this passing world, is not from the Spirit of Truth. It is much more becoming and much more likely to bring a meeting into tenderness and into the resultant sense of the breathings forth of Divine consolations, to be silent in the confession of its need. For God hates shams and still gives grace to the

lowly, while the proud and unbroken He knoweth afar off.

Then there is a second feature I would note--namely,

#### THE SILENCE OF REVERENCE

We profess to approach to the throne of the thrice Holy One when we come together. Is it not much more respectful to settle down in the silence before Him and wait His sovereign good pleasure than to rush into His august Presence with our own words? Should the High and Holy One who inhabiteth Eternity be treated with less respect than the petty potentates of earth? Would we dare to address a king unless first spoken to? A reverential silence is in itself Worship. It is the prostration of the human in the presence of the Divine. It is the confession of His majesty and the adoration of His perfections. Awe and wonder lie at the very foundation of true worship. We are in the presence of the infinite, the unbounded, the unfathomable. We are face to face with the unspeakable, the transcendent, the eternal. How irreverent to voice whatever platitudes come into our minds! How unbecoming to start religious chatter. Nay, better far to be reverentially silent. For such silence is like the fragrant incense cloud which ascended from the golden altar in the holy place of the ancient sanctuary. It is like Mary's silent breaking of the alabaster flask upon her Lord so that the house was filled with the odor of the ointment.

But there is another silence to note and it is

#### THE SILENCE OF RECOLLECTION

Now this word "recollection" has somehow dropped out of modern religious parlance. It has a medieval sound about it to our ears. And yet it is the symbol of a very real and precious experience. It expresses the very heart of what is called in the Holy Scriptures: "waiting upon the Lord." Some twenty times in the Book of Psalms and about the same number in Isaiah do we find this term. The changes are there rung on the importance and fruitfulness of "waiting." In the Hebrew the word really means "silence." But it means an active and not a dead silence. It is the soul's turning to its centre, the Divine Spirit from which it proceeds. God is regarded as immanent as well as transcendent. Man is essentially a spiritual being because of this Divine immanence. But somehow through sin and false ideas, through the witchery of the merely material, the soul has departed from its only true resting place. It is unhappy because no longer in its proper environment. Now recollection is a recalling one's wandering thoughts back into God. It is the soul turning inward to its Origin, whence the healing, the comfort and true guidance flow. For as the body lives because of the soul, so the soul because of the spirit which comes direct from the heart of God. This is God's candle in man. Because every man is a spiritual being inwardly, he lives and moves and has his being in God and is capable of regeneration. He can have heaven formed within him, but hell also if he closes his interior to heaven, and through sin and error opens to the darkness and selfishness of hell. But if the soul learns to wait upon God, it opens to Him as truly as the flower opens to the sunlight, and then the silence of recollection becomes naturally

#### THE SILENCE OF RECEPTIVITY

The wisdom and love of God flow more fully into our interiors; the wisdom of God into our spiritual understandings, and the love into our affections. The first gives spiritual perception, and the second causes our wills to will the will of God alone.

Such a time of silence is certainly not a waste. The band of Galilean disciples in the upper room did not find it so. Their receptive silence was answered by opened heavens. The wind of God filled all the house where they were sitting. And as with them, so with those similarly exercised. The inpouring produces an outpouring, the inflow, an upflow, an outflow, an overflow. Praise and public testimony arise without programme or creaturely wire-pulling in such a favored assembly. And such expressions of the abundant life will have a Divine tincture in them. They will not gather to the human, which is but the medium, but to that heavenly spring from which they flow. God in all things will be glorified through Jesus Christ. "That which the Fountain sends forth returns again to the Fountain." MAX I. REICH.

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Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/max-reich/congregational-silence/>

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