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PERSONAL AND CORPORATE SPIRITUAL GROWTH  
THROUGH THE DISCIPLINE OF  
SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

by

James Allison Belcher

A dissertation  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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Department

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## ABSTRACT

### Personal and Corporate Spiritual Growth Through the Discipline of Silence and Solitude

James Allison Belcher

The Summerville United Methodist Church experienced a steady decline in most phases of corporate life from 1976 through 1986. The major groups in the church experienced significant loss of members. The majority of the church members appeared unconcerned about their spiritual growth and the growth of the church. This writer determined the underlying problem in the church to be acedia, or spiritual apathy.

Attempts to breathe spiritual life into the church through revival services, fellowship activities, and attendance campaigns failed. The lack of spiritual life precluded the members' participation in these programs. The writer determined that a small core within the Summerville Church must experience spiritual renewal before the entire congregation could experience renewal. The writer sought voluntary participants for a small group project utilizing the discipline of silence and solitude as a means to spiritual growth.

Twelve persons participated in the project. These persons reacted to a series of twelve sermons on the theme of silence and solitude during the Sunday morning worship services. They met each Tuesday night to consider the previous Sunday's sermon and practice silence and solitude in their own lives. The practical experiences with silence and solitude came in the form of increased devotional activities,

meditation, and the reduction of the busyness and noise levels in the participants' lives.

The writer used two methods of data-gathering. The correlation of a pre- and post-research questionnaire determined the participants' growth in their observances of silence and solitude. The observation method of data-gathering determined the effectiveness of the project on the corporate life of the church.

The research questionnaire indicated the participants grew in their understanding of silence and solitude and in their willingness to incorporate the discipline into their daily lives. Observation revealed significant growth in the program of the Summerville Church following the completion of the project. Several small group participants moved into leadership positions. Spiritual growth ministries, such as prayer groups, prayer chains, and revival services, became an integral part of corporate life. Attendance in several of the church's major groups increased. The Council on Ministries adopted an evangelism emphasis. The congregation undertook several capital expenditures, including: re-roofing of the church building; re-carpeting of the sanctuary and Sunday School wing; parsonage renovation; and the purchase of new hymnals, a new baby grand piano, and new organ speakers.

The data indicated that the small group project utilizing silence and solitude as a means of spiritual growth served as a catalyst for personal and corporate spiritual growth in the Summerville United Methodist Church.

## AUTHORIZATION

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Signed James A. Belcher

1989

James Allison Belcher

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The context for this project was the Summerville United Methodist Church, located at 1201 Thirty-second Street, Phenix City, Alabama. The Summerville Church was officially organized on May 11, 1954, by Dr. T. S. Harris, Troy District Superintendent. The Rev. Dr. Harris preached the morning worship service and received fifty-six charter members. The service was the culmination of a year's work by a group of Methodists who lived in the Summerville area of Phenix City.

That work had begun during the summer of 1953. The initial organizational meetings were held in the open air of Lakewood Park. As the weather turned cooler, the meetings were moved to the Hillside Methodist Church on Crawford Road and the Women's Club House at 1100 Thirty-fifth Street. These organizational meetings produced the first worship service, held on Sunday, February 14, 1954, at the Women's Club House. Sixty people attended.

Summerville's first pastor was the Rev. Mr. George W. Gilbert. The Rev. Mr. Gilbert was actually under episcopal appointment to the Epworth Methodist Church, Phenix City, but he worked under the supervision of District Superintendent Harris to conduct Summerville's worship services until a full-time pastor could be appointed. At the May, 1954 session of the Alabama-West Florida Conference, the Rev. Mr. Robert Hendricks was appointed the church's second pastor. The Rev. Mr. Hendricks guided the new church through a two-year period of

growth that included the recruitment of 130 members and the purchase of the parcel of land on which the church currently stands.

Ground breaking ceremonies were held for the first phase of the building program on May 6, 1956. The new congregation held its initial meeting in the completed structure four months later, and continued to meet there until 1959, at which time ground was broken for a sanctuary. The sanctuary was completed on November 15, 1959, and is still in use today. The Rev. Mr. Ben Johnson was instrumental in leading Summerville through its building phase. The Rev. Mr. Johnson served the Summerville congregation from 1958 through 1963. During his tenure, and as a result of his leadership, the Lay Witness Movement was born at Summerville in 1961.<sup>1</sup>

Since its organization in 1954, the Summerville Methodist Church has had twelve pastors. The initial growth that the church experienced was not sustained. The congregation has been in a stable to declining mode for the past thirteen years. The past six years (1983 through 1989) have been especially difficult, due to unresolved environmental and sociological problems.

#### The Problem

The pattern for Church life was established in the New Testament. Luke summarized it in Acts.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were

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<sup>1</sup> Harold S. Coulter, A People Courageous (Columbus: Howard Printing Co., 1976), 389-390.

together and had all things in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

This account of the New Testament Church highlights several of its characteristics.

- \*The members received the instruction of their leaders, the apostles.
- \*The members felt a strong sense of participation in the fellowship.
- \*The church members observed and respected the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.
- \*The members devoted themselves to the practice of prayer.
- \*The members experienced a sense of awe and wonder when they saw God manifest his mighty power.
- \*The members exhibited a spirit of generosity, sharing their possessions and even selling them in order to help others in need.
- \*The body met regularly for worship.
- \*The church members recognized the importance of informal association through the fellowship of home and table.
- \*People outside of the church liked the early church members.
- \*The church had a strong sense of appeal to outsiders, many of whom sought formal affiliation.

These characteristics suggest the norm for every local church. They should be the minimum standard for congregational life and ministry.

When this writer was appointed to the Summerville Church in June, 1986, he detected few of the characteristics of a healthy church.

Something was seriously wrong at Summerville. To sense the problems, one did not have to read the statistical reports in the Conference Journal nor listen to the horror stories of disillusioned members. All that was necessary was a walk through the building. The damp, mildewed Sunday School rooms, the pastor's study that had not been cleaned out in years, the broken toilets, and the musty odor in the fellowship hall told their own stories. All one needed to do to sense the low morale of the church was to stand before the congregation on Sunday morning and feel its coldness, alienation, and hostility. Personal observations were confirmed in subsequent weeks by parishioners' reports of church conflict and by encounters with disillusioned long-term members.

At this point, The Summerville Methodist Church found itself locked in a literal struggle for survival. Over a ten-year period, from 1976 through 1985, Sunday School attendance had decreased from eighty-five to fifty-five. The membership in the United Methodist Women had declined from forty-five to thirty. The membership in the United Methodist Men had fallen from twenty to twelve. Only thirty seven persons had joined the church on profession of faith during the ten-year period. The only positive statistics were those of church membership and morning worship attendance. Both had remained stable, church membership holding steady at 270 and worship attendance fluctuating between 90 and 110.

Struggling to maintain their faith, the members went through the motions of institutional religion. They attended Sunday School and worship, and received the Sacrament of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of the month, according to their custom. The church was even



organized into the various boards and committees mandated by The Book of Discipline. But these activities constituted an external veneer. There was only minimal life in the church, very little vibrancy--and none of the expressions of closeness, generosity, and expectancy that characterized the New Testament Church. The apostle Paul's description of an unhealthy congregation serves as an appropriate description for the Summerville Church at this stage in its corporate life: "...having a form of godliness but denying its power" (II Tim. 3:5).

The most pressing problem was a division in the church. In late 1985 and early 1986, the Summerville Church split over two issues. The first issue was the termination of a staff member. The second, and equally serious issue, was the unexpected resignation of the pastor in March, 1986. The second issue resulted in an all-out power struggle in the church.

For years, the Summerville Church had been controlled by a small segment of its membership; no more than six people comprised a strong vocal minority. The majority of the membership had remained passively silent and on the periphery of involvement in the affairs of the congregation. When the previous pastor resigned, leaving the pastoral ministry in the middle of the Conference year, the silent majority concluded that the vocal minority had coerced his resignation. At that point the silent majority attempted to wrest control of the church from the vocal minority.

The power struggle at Summerville continued for three years. It was especially evident during the Charge Conferences of 1986 through 1988. Not having a majority in the Committee on Nominations, the formerly passive majority gradually gained control of the church and

its important committee assignments through nominations from the Charge Conference floor.

The immediate problem, therefore, was division in the church. But the division was only symptomatic of a much more serious problem in the Summerville Church: the lack of relationship with God and concomitant spiritual shallowness. That problem had been brought about by four sociological phenomena over a period of four decades.

#### The Phenomenon of Political Corruption

Edwin Strictland and Gene Wortman describe the Phenix City of the first half of the twentieth century.

Phenix City, Alabama, is unlike any other city in the United States. Chicago has its loop. New Orleans has its French Quarter. Kansas City, New York, Miami, San Francisco all have their areas of evil. In Phenix City, until recently, there was no border between good and bad. It was all bad. The downtown area was an unending scene of night clubs, honky tonks, clip joints...whore houses, and gambling casinos. Every highway leading into the city was lined with these institutions.... One could climb a tall tree, spit in any direction, and where the wind wafted the splutter, there one could find organized crime, corruption, sex, and human depravity.

No attempts were made to conceal illegal activities. The brightly lighted neons beckoned twenty-four hours a day, a block from the court-house and a block from city hall.<sup>2</sup>

The close proximity of Fort Benning Military Reservation (one of the largest United States Army infantry training bases in the world) and the city of Columbus, Georgia, made Phenix City an ideal location for organized crime. Soldiers and civilians streamed across the

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<sup>2</sup> Edwin Strictland and Gene Wortman, The Phenix City Story (Birmingham: Vulcan Press, 1955), 1.

Chattahoochee River to drop their money into slot machines that paid off five cents on the dollar and to gamble with marked cards, stacked decks, and loaded dice. In addition to gambling and drinking, people could turn to one of the large numbers of prostitutes who walked Phenix City's streets. Dope was sold as openly as soft drinks, with heroine being "the hottest narcotic in town."<sup>3</sup>

Baby-selling was another lucrative business during the criminal era of Phenix City. Prostitutes and wayward girls frequently became pregnant. If they opted for an abortion, the procedure was performed by a madam who lived at the edge of town. If, however, they opted to carry the baby to term, they had the option of selling the child. The procedure for selling babies in Phenix City was simple: the mother was given free health care during pregnancy; she was taken to the local hospital at the onset of labor; and when the baby was five days old, it was taken to a restaurant two blocks from the hospital where it was turned over to its purchasers.<sup>4</sup>

The Syndicate controlled almost every institution in Phenix City during these years, including some of the churches. Even in those churches where crime bosses did not hold influence, the ministers were afraid to speak out. Those who did so refrained from naming specific persons and places. Strictland and Wortman tell of one pastor who challenged specific abuses. The week following his indictment of specific crime bosses, he received an emergency telephone call. When the pastor arrived to give aid and comfort, he discovered a lone

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<sup>3</sup> Strictland and Wortman, 75-82.

<sup>4</sup> Strictland and Wortman, 98-99.

female. The female accused the pastor of sexual advances, whereupon police appeared immediately and placed him under arrest.<sup>5</sup>

Gradually, the Ministerial Alliance of Phenix City gathered the courage to exert leadership in a clean-up effort. The Russell County Betterment Association (R. B. A.) was organized in 1951 as a result of the resistance the Alliance encountered. The creation of the R. B. A. signaled the beginning of the end of blatant organized crime in Phenix City.

On June 17, 1954, Phenix City attorney and State Senator Albert Patterson requested that Alabama Governor Gordon Persons order a gambling raid on Phenix City.<sup>6</sup> On June 18, 1954, a few minutes after nine o'clock in the evening, organized crime elements assassinated Senator Patterson.<sup>7</sup> On June 19, 1954, Governor Persons proclaimed "a state of qualified martial law in Russell County, Alabama."<sup>8</sup> The Alabama National Guard seized control of Phenix City, and organized crime in the area was significantly curtailed.

One need only note the proximity of the date of the organization of the Summerville Methodist Church (May 11, 1954) to the date of the clean-up effort (June 19, 1954) to realize that the two events were integrally related. The exact nature of that relationship is uncertain since the majority of citizens who recall those days were hesitant to elaborate. However, one long-term Methodist pastor in Phenix City

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<sup>5</sup> Strictland and Wortman, 183.

<sup>6</sup> Strictland and Wortman, 75-82.

<sup>7</sup> Strictland and Wortman, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Strictland and Wortman, 252.

acknowledged that there had been a split in the Trinity Methodist Church, the oldest Methodist Church in Phenix City. That split, the pastor confirmed, had occurred because of the clean-up, and it had resulted in the organization of the Summerville Methodist Church.<sup>9</sup> The Summerville Church, therefore, was born against a backdrop of crime and political corruption.

That politically corrupt environment has continued to influence the church for four decades. When Russell County was placed under martial law in 1954, the National Guard succeeded only in eliminating the openness of organized crime. The bars, houses of prostitution, and gambling casinos were closed, thus ending the parade of depravity. But the voices of that depravity were not completely silenced. The criminal leaders and corrupt officials who were not arrested simply went underground and continued their illegal operations. Consequently, there exists a criminal element and mentality in Phenix City thirty-five years after the clean-up. The corruption is largely hidden; but the citizens know those involved in the criminal activities. Some are "respectable" citizens, active in local politics and in the city's civic and religious institutions.

That an atmosphere of corruption and depravity adversely affects a church's spiritual life is not simply one writer's speculation. The hypothesis has biblical support, the supreme example being the church in Corinth. The ancient city of Corinth was located in the southern part of Greece between the Saronic Gulf and the Corinthian Gulf. Because of that location it became one of the prosperous trading and

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<sup>9</sup> Cecil L. Coleman, interview with author, 18 January 1989.

commercial cities of the ancient world. But the location also contributed to the immoral reputation the city acquired. On a hill overlooking Corinth stood the Acropolis, the temples of the Greek gods and goddesses. One of those temples was that of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Attached to the temple of Aphrodite were one thousand priestesses who functioned as sacred prostitutes. In the evenings these sacred prostitutes descended from the temple and plied their trade on the streets of Corinth. The sailors, traders, and merchants who flocked to Corinth from every corner of the world only made the business more lucrative. Corinth developed such a reputation for immorality that the name itself became a by-word for licentiousness. The Greek word korinthiazasthia, meaning "to live like a Corinthian," became a synonym for drunkenness and debauchery.<sup>10</sup>

In such an environment it was inevitable that the Corinthian Church should experience a multitude of problems. Paul addressed some of those problems in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: schism, immorality, pride in the exercise of spiritual gifts, and the dispute regarding meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Significantly, Paul referred to the Corinthian Christians as worldly and immature: "Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual, but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. Indeed you are still not ready. You are still worldly" (I Cor. 3:1-3a).

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<sup>10</sup> William Barclay., The Letters to the Corinthians (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 1-3.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus attested to the difficulty of spiritual growth in the midst of worldliness. He referred to the seed sown among thorns, warning that it was akin to the Word of God sown in the hearer's heart but unable to grow because of being choked "by life's worries, riches, and pleasures" (Luke 8:4-15).

Thus, the Summerville Methodist Church in Phenix City, Alabama, was not the first church to suffer spiritually because of its environment of corruption and depravity. Unwholesome social conditions have been, and continue to be, detrimental to personal spiritual growth and a healthy congregational life.

#### The Phenomenon of Affluence

The expression "the other side of the tracks" has been used to describe communities separated socially, economically, and racially by railroad tracks. The image it creates is that of a community whose lower, more poverty-stricken population is segregated from its more affluent population. While the expression does not apply to Phenix City, Alabama, in the strict sense, a good case can be made for its use. The railroad track stretches east and west through Phenix City approximately one-half of a mile north of what would be the city's diameter if it were laid out in circular fashion. While the tracks offer no rigid line of demarcation between the city's rich and poor, one may observe that generally the lower to lower middle classes live on the south side, while the middle to upper classes reside on the north side. The south side of town may be described as experiencing a state of transition as the more affluent there relocate to the north and northwest areas.

The Summerville Methodist Church stands on the north side of Phenix City. The congregation is composed of white collar, middle to upper class citizens. The membership consists of lawyers, dentists, bankers, college professors, elementary and secondary educators with graduate and post-graduate degrees, small business owners, corporate executives, and old-line families with inherited wealth. The church has the reputation of being small, but elite.

The name of the church indicates its affluence. In the first half of the century, Phenix City had fewer people than it has in 1989. Hence it covered less geographical area. The Summerville area was an area north of town. The summer and weekend homes of the more affluent citizens were located on Lake Oliver, other smaller lakes, and the Chattahoochee River. The area came to be known as Summerville because of this phenomenon. Summerville came into existence as an affluent community; thus the people attached a high priority to making money.

The Scripture makes clear the dangers of pursuing wealth. Its admonitions are not directed as much at wealth itself as they are at the consuming passion to become wealthy, a desire which sometimes leads to the detriment of other, more important aspects of life. The pursuit of affluence in the Old Testament dominated Jacob's life. The price tag was alienation from his family (Gen. 27-36). The Psalmist warned that those who trust in affluence rather than in God will eventually go "down to everlasting ruin" (Ps. 52:5-7). He urged his readers to avoid setting their hearts on riches (Ps. 62:10). The writer of Proverbs declared, "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall...." (Prov. 11:28). Even the prophets spoke against the pursuit of affluence. Jeremiah stated that the person who gets rich "by



unjust means" will ultimately prove himself "to be a fool" (Jer. 17:11).

Jesus warned against the danger of wealth and the desire to be wealthy. He urged the rich young man to divest himself of his wealth because the young man's attachment to it prevented him from serving God. Following the encounter with the young man, Jesus warned his apostles, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matt. 19:16-24). Jesus taught, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort" (Luke 6:24). He expounded the parable of the rich man whose insensitivity to the poor catapulted him into eternal torment (Luke 16:19-31).

Paul instructed Timothy to warn the wealthy against trusting in their riches. He wrote, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God..." (I Tim. 6:17). James declared that the rich should "weep and wail" because of the misery brought on by their pursuit of wealth. He accused the wealthy of hoarding their wealth and fattening their purses by cheating their workers out of their rightful wages (Jas. 5:1-5).

The Scriptures indicate that wealth in and of itself and the possession of it is not wrong nor immoral; but it is dangerous. The danger of affluence lies in its tendency to generate a desire to possess still greater wealth. The pursuit of money can become all-consuming. Too great a concern about money dulls one's spiritual sensitivities. Affluence can create a climate in which the concerns

of the present world overshadow the reality of the unseen world, with the ultimate result that affluence replaces God as the object of trust.

The church in Ephesus was a case in point. The risen Christ accused the Ephesian Christians of having forsaken their "first love" (Rev. 2:4). The climate of worldliness and materialism in which the Ephesian Church existed may have been one of the reasons for its apostasy. Ephesus had the greatest harbor in Asia in New Testament times. In addition, all of the roads in the Cayster Valley converged upon the city. Merchants and traders traveled to Ephesus by ship and land from as far away as Mesopotamia. Ephesus was "the Gateway of Asia." The ancient geographer Strabo called it "the Market of Asia." Its location made it the richest trading city on the continent.<sup>11</sup> Amid such a climate the Christians in Ephesus persevered in their faith, as the risen Christ affirmed; but their hearts were not warm as they formerly had been (Rev. 2:1-7).

The Summerville Methodist Church is certainly not the first church to lapse into spiritual indifference because of the pursuit of worldly goods. Such pursuit, on more than one occasion, has proven detrimental to growth in Christ.

#### The Phenomenon of Busyness

One of the most pressing problems in the Summerville Methodist Church is the busyness of its members. Steven Harper has concluded that "busyness is a contemporary curse that afflicts us from childhood

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<sup>11</sup> William Barclay, ed., The Revelation of John, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 70-71.

to the end of life."<sup>12</sup> That statement applies to the Summerville Methodist Church. Its members have been historically and continue to be busy people.

Busyness is frequently linked to affluence. The frantic pace of the members' lives is largely dictated by their drives for professional recognition and reward, newer and bigger homes in the more elite sections, more prestigious automobiles, and the most fashionable attire. The hurried lifestyle necessary to obtain these material things has exacted a heavy toll in time and energy. Thus, the people have little left to invest in the church and their own spiritual development.

Ronald Klug has described the lifestyle of much of the church membership. He quotes Henri Nouwen:

In general we are busy people.... Our agendas are filled with appointments, our days and weeks filled with engagements, and our years filled with plans and projects. There is seldom a period in which we do not know what to do, and we move through life in such a constipated way that we do not even take time to rest and wonder if any of the things we think, say,<sup>13</sup> and do are worth thinking, saying, and doing.

The people at Summerville, in the words of Thomas Kelly, "feel the pull of many obligations, and try to fulfill them all."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Steven Harper, Embrace the Spirit: An Invitation to Friendship with God (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987), 117.

<sup>13</sup> Ronald Klug, How to Keep a Spiritual Journal (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982), 73.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon MacDonald, Ordering Your Private World (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 121.

Serious consequences result from the busy lifestyle. Pascal writes, "All the evils of life have fallen upon us because men will not sit alone quietly in a room."<sup>15</sup> Pascal's hyperbole reflects the price individuals and society pay for busyness. In the Summerville Church that price has been the lack of spiritual depth.

Thomas a' Kempis summarizes the effects of the frantic lifestyle:

For a pitiful gain we toil and run; while  
spiritual harm passes away into forgetfulness,  
and hardly at last do we return to a sense of  
it. That which little or nothing profits is  
minded, and that which is especially needful  
is negligently passed over.<sup>16</sup>

With such a lifestyle, "it is...impossible...to grow in grace...."<sup>17</sup>

Leslie Weatherhead suggests that, when people live at such a fast pace, God becomes unable to reveal himself to them. "He cannot make himself heard above the bustle and noise."<sup>18</sup> Evelyn Underhill contends that, when people live at a frantic pace, they "feel unaware of any guidance, [and become] unable to discern or understand the signals of God." She explains this happens, "not because the signals are not given, but because the mind is too troubled, clouded, and hurried to receive them."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Leslie D. Weatherhead, The Significance of Silence and Other Sermons (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1945), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 176.

<sup>17</sup> Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 162.

<sup>18</sup> Weatherhead, 23.

<sup>19</sup> Evelyn Underhill, The Spiritual Life (Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow, 1937), 113.

"Without solitude it is virtually impossible to lead a spiritual life."<sup>20</sup> The overly-busy person's soul becomes "a huge warehouse where day after day trucks unload their crates without any plan or discrimination, to be piled helter-skelter in every available corner and cranny, until it is crammed full from top to bottom with the trite, the commonplace, the insignificant, [and] the routine."<sup>21</sup>

#### The Problem of Isolation

The fourth phenomenon to affect the vibrancy of the Summerville Church has been the inability of a large segment of its members to participate fully in the life of the church. Richard B. Wilke in his book And Are We Yet Alive? cites an alarming trend concerning the age of the membership of the United Methodist Church. He notes that the death rate in the denomination increased from 10.4 per one thousand in 1964 to 12.5 per one thousand in 1984. Such figures indicate that United Methodism is becoming a denomination of older persons, a trend substantiated by one study which revealed that the Church is "made up disproportionately of people over fifty years of age."<sup>22</sup>

Bishop Wilke's citation finds living proof in the membership roster of the Summerville Methodist Church. Persons over the age of sixty comprise the church's largest Sunday School class. The same age group makes up 40 to 50 percent of the Sunday morning congregation.

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<sup>20</sup> Richard J. Foster, Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 44.

<sup>21</sup> Karl Rahner, Encounters with Silence (London: Burns and Oates, 1975), 46.

<sup>22</sup> Richard B. Wilke, And Are We Yet Alive? (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), 18-19.

Senior citizens and retired persons are outnumbered in the Summerville Church only by the young, upwardly mobile professionals.

In far too many cases, the corollary of advancing age is poor health and decreased mobility, and subsequently isolation from the life of the church. At Summerville this problem has taken the form of the elderly being unable to participate in evening activities and being forced to choose between Sunday School and worship because of physical conditions that preclude sitting for extended periods of time. This isolation has tended to produce a sense of loneliness and spiritual atrophy, as the elderly have been forced more and more into their reclining chairs behind their four walls.

Henri Nouwen writes that loneliness is "one of the most universal sources of human suffering today." Behavioral experts refer to it repeatedly as one of the primary causes of suicide, alcoholism, drug abuse, and various psychosomatic disorders.<sup>23</sup> Maxie Dunnam confirms Nouwen's observations.

I have seen the havoc separateness and aloneness play in the lives of people. Whether forced or chosen, solitariness can be destructive. It can lead to despair. It can be a flight from life. It can evoke the final flight: suicide. The negative aspects of being alone lead persons to all sorts of destructive behavior: sexual promiscuity, indulgent consumption, total immersion in the crowd. These and other perverted activities and relationships are really efforts...to avoid separation and loneliness.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life (Garden City: Image Books, 1975), 25.

<sup>24</sup> Maxie Dunnam, The Workbook on Spiritual Disciplines (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1984), 117.

The problem of loneliness is not new, nor is it limited to the shut-in and elderly. Ardis Whitman affirms, "All of us are solitaries, even when living in a house full of people." One is born alone. One searches for the meaning of life alone. Eventually one encounters death alone.<sup>25</sup> "Aloneness is the very nature of our beings."<sup>26</sup> But the pain of loneliness is heightened in a society like twentieth-century America which touts closeness, togetherness, and activity as important for a full life. The elderly often suffer from being alone.

#### The Problem of Acedia

In Spirituality for Ministry, Urban T. Holmes considers a disease known as acedia. Acedia is a disease of the soul. It affects both individual Christians and churches. Traditionally, acedia is a term for spiritual apathy--one of the "seven deadly sins." The disease was first identified by the Desert Fathers who had gone into the wilderness to contend with the forces of evil. Demons, they believed, lived in the wilderness; and the most fearsome demon with which they had to contend was acedia, also known as "the devil of the noonday sun." Symeon the New Theologian describes this demon when he warned his monks, "Do not forget your special tasks and your handicraft to walk about aimlessly and in dissipation...." Acedia is characterized by "spiritual boredom, an indifference to matters of religion, or simple

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<sup>25</sup> Ardis Whitman, "Secret Joys of Solitude," Reader's Digest, April 1983: 132.

<sup>26</sup> Ronald V. Wells, Spiritual Disciplines for Everyday Living (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1982), 58.

laziness."<sup>27</sup>

Having observed and analyzed the situation in the Summerville Methodist Church for several years, this writer concludes that its underlying problem is that of acedia. Acedia would account for the overall state of apathy in which the church has existed for a number of years. It would explain the reluctance of the membership to get involved in church life, the poor financial state of the church, the absence of growth, the virtual absence of a youth program, the low attendance in Sunday School and church, and the deteriorated condition of the building. The phenomena of political corruption, affluence, busyness, and isolation constitute the environmental and sociological factors which have contributed to this underlying problem of acedia.

Any solution one might consider for the Summerville Church needs to focus, not on the sociological phenomena, but on the underlying problem of spiritual apathy. That solution would need to take the contributing sociological factors into account, but only as secondary issues creating and exacerbating the primary problem. In addressing the primary problem, the proposed solution would need to consider how the spiritually indifferent can be led into an awareness and appreciation of the spiritual.

#### The Solution

An analysis of the congregation revealed that there is no single correct solution to the problems at Summerville. Various suggestions grew out of the church's boards and committees from time to time.

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<sup>27</sup> Urban T. Holmes, Spirituality for Ministry (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 42.



Suggestions included personal visitation and evangelism programs, stewardship and attendance campaigns, and fellowship activities. Each program ultimately proved unfruitful because the membership failed to participate.

It seemed to this writer that the majority of proposed solutions were actually second and third steps to renewal. The problem of acedia, the lack of motivation, hindered attempts to implement the proposed solutions. Evangelism programs, stewardship campaigns, and fellowship activities could succeed only when the necessary spiritual desire had been generated within the church members themselves.

The first step, therefore, in bringing renewed spiritual vitality to the Summerville Methodist Church, was to restore the spiritual bond between the people and God. In the Summerville situation, that step took the form of an experiment with the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude. The writer used a two-fold approach: (1) he preached a series of twelve sermons on silence and solitude, highlighting the experiences of various biblical characters with the discipline, and (2) the writer led a small group in a study of biblical examples of solitude, with special emphasis on the formation and cultivation of the discipline in the lives of the participants.

The theory behind the project was that, through an awareness and cultivation of the discipline, the participants' inner lives and relationships with God would find deeper expression; and a beginning would have been made toward curing the acedic condition within the Summerville Church.

C. F. Andrews contends that "God speaks to us out of silence, if only our dull ears are attuned to listen to his voice."<sup>28</sup> Robert Rice points out that silence is an important means of grace. He calls it "the primary point of the human-divine encounter."<sup>29</sup> The German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer declares, "Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable to spend keeping quiet will eventually have no time for God...."<sup>30</sup> Donald E. Demaray affirms that "...to be alone in the presence of God permits unhampered holy communication."<sup>31</sup> Demaray writes:

The regular quiet time is the laboratory for developing the capacity to hear. You will hear his voice in the busy course of the day, too. But it is in the stillness of the prayer closet that the gift of spiritual listening is given and received. God is always available...to those who have made a habit of waiting quietly before him.<sup>32</sup>

The project utilizing silence and solitude seemed an appropriate starting point for spiritual renewal. The discipline of silence held the potential for bringing the participants into a deeper relationship with God. The project, therefore, addressed in a positive manner the sociological and environmental influences which fostered acedia.

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<sup>28</sup> C. F. Andrews, Christ in the Silence (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 21.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Rice, "Minister of Silence," The Christian Century 102 (1985): 407.

<sup>30</sup> John W. Doberstein, ed., Minister's Prayer Book (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 336.

<sup>31</sup> Donald E. Demaray, How Are You Praying? (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), 86.

<sup>32</sup> Demaray, 36.

### The Solution to Corruption

One of the consequences of the atmosphere of political corruption was that the members of the Summerville Church became adept in the use of political power. Political power had been one of the methods that organized crime had used to perpetuate itself. The Russell County Betterment Association had used it to turn back the forces of organized crime. Political power had thus become the weapon the citizens of Phenix City, and more specifically the members of the Summerville Church, relied upon to effect change. The supreme example was the political in-fighting in which the church engaged over a period of several years during the power struggle. The mentality that evolved was that political power constitutes the ultimate form of power.

An experience with the discipline of silence and solitude would have the potential to dispel the myth of the supremacy of political power. Theoretically, the discipline would lead the participants into a deeper relationship with God and, in the process, introduce them to a force more powerful than political power--the power that grows from the inner self as the individual is rightly related to God through Jesus Christ. In contrast to political power, which was divisive and counterproductive to growth, spiritual power would enable the church to overcome its acedic condition and experience the growth that results from working together under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Urban T. Holmes identifies two types of power. One is an "external power [that] comes with the acquisition of role and status," political power being a prime example. External power is vested solely in the owner's role, status, or office. It has nothing to do with

character, integrity, or state of heart.<sup>33</sup> W. Richard Scott cites an example of external power in his discussion of power within the organization. He states that "power in formal organizations is determined...by design." The organization is created in such a manner that one position controls another.<sup>34</sup>

The second type of power is internal power. Internal power is best described by the Greek word *exousia*, meaning "out of being." Internal power is the kind that flows out of the human being. Its source is not in role, status, nor office, but in the character, integrity, and heart of the individual.<sup>35</sup> In theological terms, this kind of power comes about as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit within the individual.

The theory behind the experience with silence and solitude is that the experience would effect a more profound God/human encounter within the participants. That encounter would hold the potential for introducing the Summerville Christians to an internal power far stronger than the external political power they have mastered through the influence of crime and political corruption.

#### The Solution to Affluence

There is an alternative to the lifestyle that pursues affluence above all else. That lifestyle is not poverty. It is the lifestyle that sets its sights on values other than material possessions. The

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<sup>33</sup> Holmes, 44-45.

<sup>34</sup> W. Richard Scott, Organizations: Rational, Natural, and Open Systems (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1987), 284.

<sup>35</sup> Holmes, 44-45.

degree of affluence or poverty is not the determining consideration in such a lifestyle, but rather the priorities and motivations of the individual. The alternative lifestyle asks the question: "Does the individual use his or her resources (however great or small those resources might be) for the advancement of the kingdom of God rather than for selfish, personal advancement?". Jesus referred to this alternative lifestyle when he instructed, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33).

Jesus gave other instructions in the Sermon on the Mount about this alternative lifestyle. He taught his hearers that they should seek spiritual treasure instead of worldly treasure (Matt. 6:19-21). He warned against the dangers of undue concern over material possessions, adding that anxiety was of no consequence because God already knew of his children's needs (Matt. 6:25-32).

Such a lifestyle frees the individual from the all-consuming drive to possess. It recognizes one does not have to give up wealth in order to know God, but it does require the placement of that wealth farther down the list of priorities. Herein lies the solution to the pursuit of affluence found among one segment of the Summerville Church.

Recognition of Jesus' principle might be difficult for the spiritually immature, such as the Summerville Christians. The words of Paul to the Corinthian Christians are applicable: "The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14).

An experience with the discipline of silence and solitude holds the potential for developing the capacity for spiritual discernment in persons. Theoretically, as the individual comes to know God better through the practice of silence and solitude, that individual will grow in spiritual understanding, hopefully to the point that the Holy Spirit can convict about the primacy of affluence.

#### The Solution to Busyness

Just as there is an alternative to the lifestyle that makes affluence its god, there is an alternative to the constant state of busyness which often accompanies it. That alternative is the incorporation of the discipline of silence and solitude into the individual's life.

In Springs in the Valley, Lettie Cowman tells of an African traveler who enlisted tribesmen to carry his gear. The procession moved rapidly the first day. The traveler felt optimistic about reaching his destination ahead of schedule. The second morning, however, the tribesmen refused to leave camp. They sat and rested. When the traveler asked the reason for the delay, the tribesmen informed him that they had gone too far too fast the first day, and that they were waiting for their souls to catch up with their bodies.<sup>36</sup> The discipline of silence and solitude would probably make a positive impact upon the busy people of the Summerville Methodist Church. It would allow their souls time to catch up with their bodies. This is the testimony of several who have studied and practiced the discipline.

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<sup>36</sup> Gordon MacDonald, Restoring Your Spiritual Passion (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), 26.

The Swiss doctor and psychologist Paul Tournier writes, "The busier we are...the more we stand in need of those times when we can renew our contact with God."<sup>37</sup> Melody Beattie suggests the need for solitude is greatest when it is the least possible to achieve.

When should we detach? When we can't stop thinking, talking about, or worrying about someone or something; when our emotions are churning and boiling...when we're hanging on by a thread, and it feels like that thread is frayed...."<sup>38</sup>

Richard J. Foster explains how solitude checks the busy lifestyle. He says that it creates an "emotional and spiritual space...in the heart." This space temporarily separates the individual from the outer world and from the busyness that accompanies it. The separation enables the individual to gain a better perspective on the busy outer world, and thus move at a less hurried pace upon re-entry.<sup>39</sup> Morton Kelsey, too, affirms that "the first step in making contact with God is learning to be alone and quiet."<sup>40</sup> St. Teresa of Avila in Way of Perfection observes, "It is well to seek greater solitude so as to make room for the Lord and allow his majesty to do his work in us."<sup>41</sup>

In theory, therefore, an experience with silence and solitude would serve as a brake to the fast-paced schedules which many of the

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<sup>37</sup> Klug, 80.

<sup>38</sup> Melody Beattie, Codependent No More (New York: Harper-Hazeldom, 1987), 58.

<sup>39</sup> Richard J. Foster, "The Celebration of Meditative Prayer," Christianity Today 27 (7 Oct. 1983): 22.

<sup>40</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, The Other Side of Silence (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 94.

<sup>41</sup> Basil M. Pennington, Centering Prayer (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 30.

Summerville Christians maintain. A slower pace will hopefully place them in a position where they can hear better the voice of God.

### The Solution to Loneliness

People cope with loneliness in a variety of ways. One common method is avoidance. One observer has noted that "most of modern life is a studied attempt to avoid ever being alone...."<sup>42</sup>

We...have called aloneness "loneliness." When we regard these experiences as loneliness we then rush out to seek many ways to fill the void. If we are unsuccessful in filling the emptiness we may end in boredom, despair, hopelessness, or alienation.<sup>43</sup>

Denial is another contemporary way of dealing with loneliness. Even the cultural language suggests denial:

Please come in, it is so good to see you....  
Let me introduce you to this very special friend  
of mine who would love to meet you.... It was so  
great to talk with you and have a chance to visit  
with you....<sup>44</sup>

Such language underscores the desire to be close, and the pretense of closeness; but it hides the fact that one may not be close at all.

Another common method for coping with loneliness is the seeking of shallow relationships and the superficial sharing of problems. There is an epidemic of "empty chatter, easy confessions, hollow talk, senseless compliments, poor praise, and boring confidentialities" in the world today.<sup>45</sup> One wonders if it is the consequence of people

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<sup>42</sup> Kelsey, 96-97.

<sup>43</sup> Wells, 58.

<sup>44</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 26.

<sup>45</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 32.



"having lost contact with their innermost self."<sup>46</sup> Some hope that, in the intimacy of sharing, the burden of loneliness will be lifted. Often, however, such relationships only lead to more intense loneliness once the exchange has ended.<sup>47</sup>

Henri Nouwen observes that "the roots of loneliness are very deep and cannot be touched by optimistic advertisement, substitute love images, or social togetherness."<sup>48</sup> Avoidance, denial, and distraction remain inadequate and unrealistic. The healthy way to come to grips with the problem of loneliness is to convert that loneliness into meaningful solitude.

There is a difference between loneliness and solitude. Loneliness is characterized by emptiness and dissatisfaction; solitude by fullness and contentment. In loneliness the individual feels alone even when others may be present. In solitude there is no loneliness even though no one else is present. Depression typifies loneliness, whereas in solitude there is a quiet joy. Maxie Dunnam summarizes the difference between loneliness and solitude when he writes, "There is a difference between being alone and being alone with God."<sup>49</sup>

Herein lies the solution to loneliness, and concomitant spiritual atrophy, of some of the Summerville Church's elderly. They must be equipped to transform their loneliness into meaningful

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<sup>46</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 39.

<sup>47</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 35.

<sup>48</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 26.

<sup>49</sup> Maxie Dunnam, The Workbook of Living Prayer (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1974), 27.

sclitude. They must be enabled to travel what Henri Nouwen calls "the difficult road...of conversion."<sup>50</sup> An experience with the discipline of silence and solitude would hopefully provide them with the necessary inner resources to make such a journey. It would hopefully "create that precious space" where they could hear the voice of God and feel the presence of God even in their isolation.<sup>51</sup>

### The Conclusion

This writer recognizes that silence and solitude is not a panacea for all of life's problems. It is, however, a means of entering more fully into the presence of God. And the closer one grows to the Lord, the better equipped one is to confront life's problems.

Susan Muto concludes that every person needs to experience some degree of silence and solitude: "the teacher, the nurse, the social worker, the artist, the poet, the doctor, the lawyer, the housewife, [and] the cab driver." She calls the discipline "a survival measure in the modern world."<sup>52</sup> This writer's experiences with the Summerville United Methodist Church over the previous three years attest to the truth of Muto's observation. Everyone--including the affluent, the busy, the lonely, and those who live out their Christian commitments in an environment of political corruption--need the discipline of silence and solitude in order to grow spiritually.

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<sup>50</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 34.

<sup>51</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 42.

<sup>52</sup> Susan Annette Muto, Pathways of Spiritual Living (Garden City: Image Books, 1984), 58.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

The problem and proposed solution generated the following thesis statement: this study will develop, implement, and evaluate a twelve-week series of sermons and small group experiences in the Summerville United Methodist Church utilizing the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude with the purpose of heightening the participants' understanding and practice of this means of grace and revitalizing the spiritual life and program of the church. The thesis statement assumes the following methodology:

- \*the development of the project
- \*the implementation of the project
- \*the evaluation of the project

To guide the development, implementation, and evaluation of the project, the writer established a Congregational Reflection Group (C. R. G.) in the Summerville United Methodist Church. The group included laity who held key positions in the church: the Lay Leader, the Chairperson of the Work Area on Evangelism, the Chairperson of the Work Area on Mission, the Chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and the Lay Delegate to Annual Conference. The writer also invited other individuals who expressed interest in silence and solitude to serve on the Congregational Reflection Group. The C. R. G. held eight meetings from June, 1988, through May, 1989.

### The Development of the Project

The developmental phase contained several components: a definition of terms used in the project/dissertation, a review of the pertinent literature, the preparation of the small group study manual and sermon series, and the design of the research questionnaire for gathering data.

### The Definition of Terms

The writer used the following terms throughout the project/dissertation:

1. Silence and solitude
2. Small group experience
3. Sermon series
4. Participants/respondents
5. Spiritual growth
6. Quiet time

The term "silence and solitude" refers to the nature of the project/dissertation. The terms "small group experience," "sermon series," "participants/respondents," and "quiet time" refer to the data-gathering phase of the project/dissertation. The term "spiritual growth" refers to the hypothesis and anticipated results of the project/dissertation.

Silence and solitude. Silence and solitude usually constitutes two distinct terms. Silence refers to the "absence of any sound or noise."<sup>1</sup> Solitude refers to "the state of being or living alone;

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<sup>1</sup> "Silence," The American College Dictionary.

seclusion."<sup>2</sup> Richard J. Foster, in his discussion of the ancient spiritual disciplines, notes the interrelatedness of silence and solitude: "Without silence there is no solitude." Foster states that silence and solitude, in the context of the ancient spiritual disciplines, always involves "the act of listening...to God...." The purpose of the discipline is to "see and hear" God better.<sup>3</sup> This writer uses silence and solitude within the context of the ancient spiritual disciplines. He, therefore, uses the terms to refer to a single entity--the process of withdrawal and quiet for the purpose of entering into a deeper relationship with God. Since the writer uses silence and solitude to refer to one entity, he refers to the term in the singular number.

The writer recognizes that one may experience the discipline of silence and solitude in different ways: through withdrawal from the outer environment of people and activity and through the reduction of the noise level in the individual's life. Withdrawal from the outer world may be total, as in the case of the hermits and other participants in the monastic lifestyle; or withdrawal may be partial, as in the practice of devotional activities, physical exercise, and periodic personal retreats. One also may experience the discipline of silence and solitude through the process of inner withdrawal in the midst of a noisy, busy environment. Inner withdrawal often comes through the practice of prayer and various forms of meditation.

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<sup>2</sup> "Solitude," The American College Dictionary.

<sup>3</sup> Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 86.

Small group experience. The American College Dictionary defines "experience" as "a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something."<sup>4</sup> The writer uses the term "small group experience" to refer collectively to the twelve to sixteen persons who reacted to the sermon series on silence and solitude and met weekly to discuss silence and solitude in the Bible and practice the discipline in their own lives. The key word in this term is "experience"--each individual in the small group "personally encountered" the discipline of silence and solitude and "underwent" training in various methods of the discipline's application.

Sermon series. A sermon refers to "a discourse for the purpose of religious instruction or exhortation...." It is "based on a text of Scripture and delivered from a pulpit."<sup>5</sup> "A number of things, events, etc. ranged or occurring in spatial, temporal, or other succession" constitutes a series.<sup>6</sup> A series of sermons, therefore, refers to a number of religious discourses, "based on a text and delivered from a pulpit," arranged in a specific order.

The writer uses the term "sermon series" in the project/dissertation to refer to the sermons he delivered on the theme of silence and solitude. The sermon series on the theme of silence and solitude, together with the small group experience, constitutes the core of the project/dissertation.

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<sup>4</sup> "Experience," The American College Dictionary.

<sup>5</sup> "Sermon," The American College Dictionary.

<sup>6</sup> "Series," The American College Dictionary.

Participants/respondents. The term "participants" refers to one who "takes or has a part or shares."<sup>7</sup> The writer uses this term to indicate those individuals who "had a part" in the project/dissertation. The writer uses the term "respondents" to refer to the participants when they were responding to the pre-test and post-test data-gathering instruments. Thelma Gould indicates that "respondents" is the appropriate reference for persons involved in this kind of data-gathering methodology.<sup>8</sup>

Spiritual growth. The American College Dictionary offers several definitions of "spiritual." "Of or pertaining to sacred things, pertaining or belonging to the church, ecclesiastical, religious, devotional, sacred" constitutes the usage identified with the context of this project/dissertation.<sup>9</sup> The writer uses the term "spiritual growth" to describe the anticipated result of the project upon the Summerville Methodist Church--individual and corporate growth in relation to the sacred (deeper relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ). Frank Bateman Stanger defines this kind of spiritual growth as "growth in spirituality according to the image of Christ...the journey of the total person toward wholeness."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Participants," The American College Dictionary.

<sup>8</sup> Thelma Gould, "Dissertation Writing and Field Research," Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, 12 Jan. 1989.

<sup>9</sup> "Spiritual," The American College Dictionary.

<sup>10</sup> Forbis Lee Kivett, "The Renewal Effect upon the Congregation by Small Groups Using an Adaptation of John Wesley's Band Model," (D. Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1988), p. 18.

Quiet time. "Quiet time," in the traditional Christian usage, refers to the period of time the Christian spends in the exercise of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible-reading, meditation, etc.. During the quiet time, the practitioner secludes himself or herself from outside interruptions so as to commune with the Lord without interference or distraction. The practitioner may engage in quiet time activities as frequently or infrequently as he or she chooses. Many persons establish their quiet time at the beginning or end of the day. The purpose of the quiet time is to achieve spiritual growth through unhindered communication with the Lord.

#### The Review of the Literature

The writer consulted the following libraries: the Asbury College and Asbury Theological Seminary libraries, Wilmore, Kentucky; the University of Kentucky library, Lexington, Kentucky; the Candler School of Theology library, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; the Chattahoochee Valley Community College library, Phenix City, Alabama; the Columbus College library, Columbus, Georgia; the Holy Trinity Shrine library, Holy Trinity, Alabama; and the Phenix City Municipal Library, Phenix City, Alabama.

The literature related to the topic of silence and solitude is extensive. Much of it comes out of the Roman Catholic tradition, which for centuries has been researching and compiling data on the spiritual disciplines. Many of these works are considered classics, and were written by authors such as Teresa of Avila and Thomas a' Kempis. The classical writings on this subject frequently refer to the primacy of silence and solitude among the spiritual disciplines.



In recent years a rediscovery of the importance of silence and solitude has emerged. This renewed interest in this spiritual discipline has produced a wealth of modern research in the field. The research comes from various denominations of the Christian faith. Roman Catholic scholarship continues to be important through the contributions of recent or contemporary scholars like Thomas Merton, Carlo Carretto, Henri J. M. Nouwen, and Susan Annette Muto. The Episcopal tradition has contributed to the field through the works of Ron Del Bene and Urban T. Holmes. Richard J. Foster writes from the Quaker tradition, as does Dallas Willard from the Baptist tradition. The Methodist tradition has made its own contributions. Scholars such as Maxie Dunnam, Steve Harper, and Donald E. Demaray represent insights from the Wesleyan heritage. Writers and pastors such as Gordon MacDonald, Edward B. Bratcher, and William M. Moremen approach the discipline from the perspective of the professional ministry.

There is also an abundance of secular literature on the subject of silence and solitude. Anthony Storr writes about the relationship between the discipline and the nurture of the self. Nicholas Berdyaev explores the sociological dimensions of solitude. Stanislaw A. Zielinski examines the relationship between silence and psychology. Melody Beattie articulates the psychological need for solitude.

The following paragraphs highlight some of the works which this writer found especially helpful. The works are categorized according to their authors' religious traditions.

Catholic scholarship. Thomas a' Kempis in the devotional classic The Imitation of Christ addresses many aspects of the spiritual life,

including the value of silence and solitude. He notes that many of the saints avoided society, choosing to live for God in secret. The Scripture references in this book helped this writer in ascertaining what the Bible says about the discipline of silence and solitude. The admonitions to silence also were encouraging to this writer as he sought to incorporate the discipline into his devotional life.<sup>11</sup>

In The Silent Life, Thomas Merton writes about the silent monastic orders. He divides them into two categories, the Cenobites and the Hermits. (The amount of silence and solitude the order observes determines whether it is a Cenobitic or Hermit order). Merton says that there are four main Cenobitic orders: the Benedictines, the Primitive Benedictines, the monks of Solesmes, and the Cistercians. He includes the Carthusians and the Camaldolese among the most stringent Hermit orders. In the volume, Merton offers helpful insight into the meaning of monasticism and the purpose and responsibilities of monks.<sup>12</sup>

Merton's book Thoughts in Solitude is another helpful volume. The two years it took for Merton to produce the work gave him numerous opportunities for silent reflection. The work contains Merton's thoughts which grew out of his reflective moments. It is divided into two parts: "Aspects of the Spiritual life" and "The Love of Solitude." The second section explains how silence and solitude can lead the

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 11-156.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Merton, The Silent Life (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, Inc., 1957), 7-131.

individual into a deeper relationship with the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

Carlo Carretto's Letters from the Desert is another insightful volume from the Catholic tradition. This work grew out of Carretto's solitary contemplations in the Sahara Desert. It offers insight into the purification process which the discipline of solitude often produces in the practitioner's life.<sup>14</sup>

Henri J. M. Nouwen's book Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life outlines a pattern for experiencing union with God. Nouwen believes that every person must reach out in three directions: to the inner self, to other people, and to God. He calls the first movement (toward the inner self) a journey from loneliness to solitude; the second (to other people), a journey from hostility to hospitality; and the third (toward God), a movement from illusion to prayer. The first section of the book offers insight into the problem of loneliness. It suggests productive solitude as a solution to loneliness.<sup>15</sup>

The Way of the Heart by Henri J. M. Nouwen offers important insight into the relationship between silence, solitude, and prayer. It suggests the three elements as alternatives to the busy, compulsive lifestyle that often characterizes twentieth-century American life. The book also offers biographical and historical sketches of some of

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, Inc., 1958), 11-123.

<sup>14</sup> Carlo Carretto, Letters from the Desert (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972), 1-146.

<sup>15</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life (Garden City: Image Books, 1975), 16-62.

the saints who have practiced silence and solitude.<sup>16</sup>

In Pathways of Spiritual Living, Susan Annette Muto offers practical advice for living the spiritual life in an unspiritual world. She focuses on various steps along the way of holiness: silence, solitude, prayer, meditation, formative reading, and keeping a journal. Muto believes that God calls all people, not just monks and hermits, to live the spiritual life. Her book attempts to help them do so.<sup>17</sup>

Methodist scholarship. In Alive in Christ: The Dynamic Process of Spiritual Formation, United Methodist author Maxie Dunnam contends that the discovery of the reality of being in Christ constitutes the Christian community's greatest need. Dunnam believes this reality is the key to spiritual growth. While the volume does not speak specifically about the discipline of silence and solitude, it considers the discipline's ultimate goal: intimacy with Christ. Dunnam also refers to the role of the desert experience in spiritual formation.<sup>18</sup>

The Workbook on Spiritual Disciplines by Maxie Dunnam offers a six-week study guide for groups or individuals seeking spiritual growth. The book seeks to foster spiritual growth through teaching the practice of the disciplines. Dunnam considers solitude during

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<sup>16</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Way of the Heart (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 5-49.

<sup>17</sup> Susan Annette Muto, Pathways of Spiritual Living (Garden City: Image Books, 1984), 13-185.

<sup>18</sup> Maxie Dunnam, Alive in Christ: The Dynamic Process of Spiritual Formation (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1982), 9-159.

Week Five. He defines solitude as a discipline one may practice even in the midst of a busy, public life. Dunnam contends that solitude increases the capacity for spiritual discernment. He says it also enhances the individuals's prayer life and creates a feeling of solidarity with other people. The group activities he outlines helped this writer as he led the Summerville small group in the practice of the discipline.<sup>19</sup>

In The Workbook of Living Prayer, Maxie Dunnam offers another six-week study course. This study focuses on the development of the prayer life. Dunnam contends that silence and solitude is a necessary ingredient in the life of prayer. He notes the difference between loneliness and aloneness with God. He further notes the role of solitude in the development of Jesus' prayer life.<sup>20</sup>

Steve Harper is another United Methodist contributor to the field of silence and solitude. In Prayer Ministry in the Local Church, Harper details how one may lead the congregation into the ministry of prayer. The chapter on "Daily Prayer and Devotion" offers exceptional insight into establishing a meaningful daily quiet time. Harper notes the importance of having a special time and place for being alone with God.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Maxie Dunnam, The Workbook on Spiritual Disciplines (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1984), 7-153.

<sup>20</sup> Maxie Dunnam, The Workbook of Living Prayer (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1974), 5-135.

<sup>21</sup> Steve Harper, Prayer Ministry in the Local Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 9-82.

In Embrace the Spirit, Steve Harper invites the reader to what he calls "friendship with God." This friendship, he contends, produces spiritual growth. Chapter five, "A New Way to Live," refers to the rhythm of involvement and withdrawal evident in the life of Jesus. Harper employs Richard J. Foster's term "fasting from people" to describe the withdrawal process. His thoughts on busyness assist in understanding the spiritual shallowness of contemporary society.<sup>22</sup>

Donald E. Demaray contributes to the body of literature from the Free Methodist tradition. His book How Are You Praying? is a manual on the practice of prayer. Praying alone constitutes one of the aspects of prayer Demaray addresses. He affirms that solitude allows the individual to talk with and listen to God, both of which are necessary for the development of intimacy. Demaray's significant contribution to the field of silence and solitude is to link the discipline to prayer.<sup>23</sup>

Quaker scholarship. In Celebration of Discipline, Richard J. Foster offers a thorough discussion on several of the spiritual disciplines. Foster categorizes each discipline according to its inward, outward, or corporate nature. The inward disciplines, according to Foster, are meditation, prayer, fasting, and study. The outward disciplines are simplicity, solitude, submission, and service. Confession, worship, guidance, and celebration constitute the corporate disciplines. Chapter seven, "The Discipline of Solitude,"

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<sup>22</sup> Steve Harper, Embrace the Spirit: An Invitation to Friendship with God (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987), 11-154.

<sup>23</sup> Donald E. Demaray, How Are You Praying? (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), 9-167.

offers numerous biblical examples of solitude. The chapter considers the relationship between silence and solitude; Foster contends they are inseparable. The chapter also offers pragmatic suggestions for the journey into solitude.<sup>24</sup>

Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline, by Richard J. Foster, is a supplement to Celebration of Discipline. In chapter seven, "The Discipline of Solitude," Foster considers the difficulty of entering into the discipline. He believes one must disregard the opinions and expectations of society if one is to become a solitary. Foster offers biblical insights into the discipline through suggested Scripture readings.<sup>25</sup>

Freedom of Simplicity, by Richard J. Foster, considers the discipline of silence and solitude. The book assists the reader in understanding and embracing the simple lifestyle. According to Foster, simplicity of lifestyle relates to the practice of solitude. Foster contends that solitude frees the individual from the clutches of society; this freedom then enables the individual to embrace the simple lifestyle. Foster stresses quality of life above quantity of life. He believes that the cultivation of silence and solitude enhances the quality of one's life.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Richard J. Foster, Celebration of Discipline (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 1-171.

<sup>25</sup> Richard J. Foster, Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 44-47.

<sup>26</sup> Richard J. Foster, Freedom of Simplicity (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 3-185.

Richard J. Foster explores prayer and meditation in his book Meditative Prayer. He notes the integral relationship between meditation and solitude. Solitude, he declares, is a pre-requisite for effective meditation. Foster outlines several steps into meditation: centering down, the process of withdrawing from outside distractions in order to focus on God; beholding the Lord, the process in which the heart focuses on God; and listening, the act whereby the individual in stillness and silence seeks to hear what God has to say.<sup>27</sup>

Baptist scholarship. The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard is a call to Christian discipleship based on the practice of the spiritual disciplines. Chapter nine, "Some Main Disciplines for the Spiritual Life," arranges the disciplines into two categories: the disciplines of abstinence and the disciplines of engagement. Willard contends that solitude is a discipline of abstinence since the practitioner is withdrawing, or abstaining, from society. Willard defines solitude as the decision to be alone in order to study the solitary experience. He considers the primacy of solitude among the other spiritual disciplines and the difficulties involved in the practice of solitude.<sup>28</sup>

Episcopal scholarship. Urban T. Holmes' Spirituality for Ministry primarily addresses the professional clergy. The volume maintains that personal faith and spirituality must be the clergy's number one priority. The book speaks to the spiritual needs of all persons,

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<sup>27</sup> Richard J. Foster, Meditative Prayer (London: Stanley L. Hunt, Ltd., 1983), 3-31.

<sup>28</sup> Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 156-192.



clergy and laity, by developing the theme of faith and spirituality. Holmes sees a correlation between prayer and meditation and the discipline of solitude. He contends that there are two types of prayer: verbal and non-verbal. The quality of silence in the person's life influences the non-verbal aspect of prayer. Holmes also considers the Jesus Prayer, a form of Christian meditation for which silence is helpful.<sup>29</sup>

In The Breath of Life: Discovering Your Breath Prayer, Ron Del Bene and Herb Montgomery invite the reader to practice a form of Christian meditation called the Breath Prayer. The authors consider the Scriptural basis for continuous prayer. They contend that the Breath Prayer is one method of praying unceasingly. Chapter eleven, "A Special Time and Place for Prayer," deals with the importance of separating from one's normal activities in order to commune with God. The volume provided an understanding of Christian meditation which the writer needed in order to lead the Summerville small group in the practice of silence and solitude.<sup>30</sup>

Other sources. Studies in Formative Spirituality is an excellent journal source for research into the discipline of silence and solitude. "Desert Spirituality," by David M. Knight, offers insight into the solitary desert experience.<sup>31</sup> "I AM in the Desert," by

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<sup>29</sup> Urban T. Holmes, Spirituality for Ministry (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 1-190.

<sup>30</sup> Ron Del Bene and Herb Montgomery, The Breath of Life: Discovering Your Breath Prayer (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1981), 1-96.

<sup>31</sup> David M. Knight, "Desert Spirituality: An Answer to Massah and Meribah," Studies in Formative Spirituality 1 (May 1980): 181-192.

Robert Wild, offers additional understanding of the solitary desert experience.<sup>32</sup> "Formation Towards Prayer Without Distraction," by Charles Cummings, explores the relationship between silence and the deeper prayer life.<sup>33</sup> In "Listening, Silence, and Obedience," Charles Maes examines the relationship between silence and obedience.<sup>34</sup> "Cistercians on the Solitary Life," by William O. Paulsell, offers insight into the solitary monastic experience.<sup>35</sup>

Several periodical articles address the subject of silence in worship. In Commonweal, J. Patrick Dobel's article "Liturgical Silence" considers the purpose of silence in the worship service. Dobel suggests ways in which the congregation can include silence in the worship experience.<sup>36</sup> Robert Rice's article "Minister of Silence," in The Christian Century, points out the place of silence in ministry.<sup>37</sup> Charles M. Olsen wrote "The Closet, the House, and the Sanctuary" in The Christian Century. He explores the relationship

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<sup>32</sup> Robert Wild, "I AM in the Desert," Studies in Formative Spirituality 1 (May 1980): 207-216.

<sup>33</sup> Charles Cummings, "Formation Towards Prayer Without Distraction," Studies in Formative Spirituality 8 (Nov. 1987): 307-317.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Maes, "Listening, Silence, and Obedience," Studies in Formative Spirituality 5 (May 1984): 211-218.

<sup>35</sup> William O. Paulsell, "Cistercians on the Solitary Life," Studies in Formative Spirituality 1 (May 1980): 217-226.

<sup>36</sup> J. Patrick Dobel, "Liturgical Silence," Commonweal 106 (1979): 430-435.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Rice, "Minister of Silence," The Christian Century 102 (1985): 406-407.

between private and family worship and corporate worship.<sup>38</sup> In "A Song of Silent Praise," published in The Christian Century, Carl Schalk writes of the benefits of silence in the worship service.<sup>39</sup> In "Lessons from the Kindergarten of Contemplation," in Christianity Today, John Warren Steen contends that many people have difficulty concentrating on spiritual matters. He cites the absence of silence in worship as an example.<sup>40</sup>

This writer found these and other sources beneficial in the development and implementation of the project. They also proved helpful in the biblical, historical, and theoretical reflection sections of the dissertation.

The Development of the Study Manual  
and Sermon Series

The review of the literature revealed the following biblical examples of solitude:

\*Jeremiah's expression of God's desire for a wilderness retreat where he could escape from Israel's unfaithfulness (Jer. 9:2).

\*Elijah's withdrawal into the wilderness after his encounter with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (I Kings 19:4).

\*Moses' solitude in the wilderness when he was taking care of Jethro's sheep (Ex. 3:10).

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<sup>38</sup> Charles M. Olsen, "The Closet, the House, and the Sanctuary," The Christian Century 98 (1981): 1285-1289.

<sup>39</sup> Carl Schalk, "A Song of Silent Praise," The Christian Century 105 (1988): 300-301.

<sup>40</sup> John Warren Steen, "Lessons from the Kindergarten of Contemplation," Christianity Today 30 (7 Feb. 1986): 30-31.

- \*Jacob's experience in solitude where he wrestled with the Lord throughout the night (Gen. 32:24).
- \*Jesus' withdrawal into the hills for prayer following the feeding of the five-thousand (Matt. 14:23).
- \*Luke's reference to Jesus' custom of seeking silence and solitude for the purpose of prayer (Luke 5:16).
- \*Jesus' transfiguration experience (Luke 9:28).
- \*Jesus' withdrawal into the inner recesses of the Garden of Gethsemane before the crucifixion (Luke 22:41).
- \*Jesus' temptation experience (Matt. 4:1-11).
- \*Jesus' solitude on the mountain before he chose his twelve apostles (Luke 6:12).
- \*Jesus' withdrawal to a lonely place upon hearing of the death of John the Baptist (Matt. 14:13).
- \*The correlation Jesus drew in the Sermon on the Mount between solitude and prayer (Matt. 6:6).
- \*Jesus' recommendation that the apostles seek silence and solitude following their return from ministry (Mark 6:31).

These examples of solitude in the Bible formed the basis for a study manual on the discipline of silence and solitude. Each example served as the focus of a weekly study for the small group. The manual concluded with a service of Holy Communion utilizing silence. The service highlighted Psalm 62 and Ecclesiastes 3:7, which also refer to silence and solitude. The service employed the rhythm of corporate prayer followed by individual, silent prayer.

The biblical examples of silence and solitude also served as the Scriptural basis for a series of twelve sermons on the discipline. Each sermon considered the context of the Scripture and the benefits which the solitary incident produced. It applied those factors to the

listeners' life situations, showing how silence and solitude could be beneficial in their lives.

#### The Methods of Data-gathering

The writer adopted the questionnaire and observation methods of research following the completion of the study manual and sermon series. He designed the questionnaire to measure the amount of silence and solitude in the respondents' lives. To accomplish this objective, the questionnaire considered factors such as the respondents' daily activities, devotional practices, and personal habits. It elicited the respondents' satisfaction levels with the quality and pace of their lifestyles. The questionnaire included introductory biographical and church background sections.

The primary objective of the research questionnaire was to measure specific practices related to the discipline of silence and solitude. The writer chose to measure these items because they constitute observable acts which lend themselves to statistical measurement. The writer chose not to measure spiritual growth utilizing the research questionnaire because spiritual growth is a subjective concept and, therefore, does not lend itself to objective, statistical measurement. The writer chose to measure the spiritual growth of the church following the completion of the project using the observation method of data-gathering. He chose to observe the program of the church and the members' willing involvement in the program in comparison to the state of the church when he assumed the pastoral leadership in June, 1986.

In preparing the research questionnaire, the writer followed the instruction of John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland in Analyzing Social

Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis. Lofland and Lofland note three methods of gathering data: "looking, listening, and asking."<sup>41</sup> This writer utilized the first and third methods: the observance of the church following the completion of the project and the asking of questions in the research questionnaire.

Lofland and Lofland consider the importance of "remote biography and personal history" in the data-gathering process. They define remote biography and personal history as "residence, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, past identities or experiences, family customs, class of origin, religion, and so forth." They note that the concerns of analysis may arise from these factors.<sup>42</sup> The potential significance of this information prompted this writer to include a facesheet to the questionnaire. Lofland and Lofland indicate that the inclusion of a facesheet in the data-gathering instrument is common. The facesheet usually asks for factual information such as name, age, sex, education, occupation, and religion.<sup>43</sup>

Lofland and Lofland state that the data-gathering process begins when the interview guide encounters "a source of puzzlement." The interview guide employs common sense to ask the question: "What is so puzzling about this situation?". Without concern for coherence, the interview guide lists questions pertinent to the puzzling matter. The process continues for several days as the interview guide

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<sup>41</sup> John Lofland and Lyn H. Lofland, Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1984), 47.

<sup>42</sup> Lofland and Lofland, 8.

<sup>43</sup> Lofland and Lofland, 57.

continues to scrutinize the puzzlement. The guide may find the input of friends and associates useful. All information is maintained in a notebook which the interview guide keeps in an accessible location.<sup>44</sup> The writer applied this process to his research questionnaire.

The questionnaire utilized open-ended and closed-ended questions for data-gathering. Open-ended questions avoided a pre-figured set of answers such as: never/sometimes/always, poor/average/excellent, or yes/no. The respondent is free to answer in any style or manner. Closed-ended questions utilized a pre-figured set of answers. The respondent must choose one of the several answers offered.<sup>45</sup>

In reviewing the research questionnaire, the Summerville Congregational Reflection Group noted the personal nature of the facesheet. The C. R. G. suggested that the respondents omit the biographical and church background sections. Lofland and Lofland consider the need to preserve anonymity:

In most naturalistic investigations, the question of providing anonymity to the people studied does not usually arise until the writing-up stage.... However, there are some types of sensitive research that push this concern with confidentiality backward in time to the point of data-logging.<sup>46</sup>

Following the development of the small group study manual and sermon series, and the design and approval of the research questionnaire, the writer prepared to implement the project in the context of the Summerville United Methodist Church.

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<sup>44</sup> Lofland and Lofland, 32.

<sup>45</sup> Thelma Gould, "Dissertation Writing and Field Research," Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, 12 Jan. 1989.

<sup>46</sup> Lofland and Lofland, 52.

### The Implementation of the Project

The implementation phase of the project/dissertation consisted of the following components: the compilation of the pre-test data, the conclusions from the pre-test data, a consideration of the scope and limitations of the project/dissertation, and the implementation of the sermon series and small group experience.

#### The Compilation of the Pre-test Data

The writer distributed the research questionnaire on Tuesday, January 17, 1989. The questions fell into four categories: (1) those relating to daily activities; (2) those concerning devotional practices; (3) those relating to specific personal habits; and (4) those having to do with the respondents satisfaction levels with their lifestyles. Not all of the sixteen respondents answered every question on the questionnaire. Some gave more than one answer per question.

Daily activities. The writer asked the respondents the following questions about their daily activities:

- \*What activities do you consider the most important in your daily routine?
- \*What activities consume the most time in your daily routine?
- \*What is your morning routine?
- \*What percent of the day are you with people?
- \*Do you enjoy being with people a large percent of the day?

The respondents considered the cultivation of family relationships and the practice of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, devotional and inspirational reading, and Bible study the most important activities



of their day. Ten of the sixteen respondents listed these activities as the most important in their daily routines. Responses given less frequently included: work, exercise, and the cultivation of friendships.

Work constituted the daily activity which consumed the majority of the respondents' time. The response was given a total of twenty-two times, some respondents listing both occupation and housework. Three respondents indicated that reading and taking care of family needs consumed a significant amount of time. Two indicated television was a significant factor in their lives.

The elements common to the majority of the respondents' morning routines were: housework, going to work, personal hygiene habits such as taking a shower and getting dressed, and eating breakfast. Seven persons indicated that a quiet time was part of their morning routine.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated they spent most of their day with people. Nine out of sixteen said they spent 90 percent of their day with people. Two stated they spent 80 percent of their day with people. Two declared they spent 50 percent of their day with others. Another indicated 60 percent. One individual said he or she spent all day with people. Only one respondent indicated he or she spent the majority of the day alone.

Devotional practices. The writer asked the respondents the following questions about their devotional patterns.

\*Do you have a daily quiet time? If not, do you have a quiet time when you can get around to it?

\*What rituals and activities comprise your quiet time?

\*How frequently do you pray?

- \*How frequently do you write in a journal?
- \*How frequently do you read the Bible?
- \*How frequently do you read inspirational literature other than the Bible?
- \*How frequently do you meditate?
- \*Do you have a special place for your devotional activities? If so, where?
- \*Do you have a certain time of day for your devotional activities? If so, when?

Eleven of the sixteen respondents indicated they practiced a quiet time daily and seven out of ten stated they practiced a quiet time when they could work it into their schedules. The respondents indicated the following rituals comprised their quiet times:

Prayer	- 12 responses
Bible-reading	- 10 responses
Thinking/Reflecting	- 9 responses
Inspirational reading	- 9 responses
Enjoying nature	- 7 responses
Keeping a journal	- 1 response

Eleven respondents indicated they prayed several times per day, while five said they prayed when they felt the need. Fourteen indicated they seldom or never wrote in a journal, while two stated they kept a journal when they felt the need to express their thoughts and feelings. Six indicated they read the Bible at least once per day, and six indicated they read the Bible several times per week. Nine respondents stated they read religious and inspirational literature other than the Bible daily or several times a week, while seven indicated they meditated at least once per day or several times per week. Five stated they seldom meditated.

The majority of the respondents stated they had no special time for their devotional activities. Those who did keep this discipline

indicated morning was their usual time. Most did not have a special place for their devotional practices. Those who did said a special room or comfortable chair was their choice.

Personal habits. The writer asked the respondents the following questions about their practices of silence and solitude:

\*Is the television/radio/VCR/sound system turned on in your home more often than not?

\*When you are traveling, is the radio or cassette player turned on in your automobile more often than not?

\*Do you ever take walks by yourself?

\*Do you ever sit alone and daydream?

\*Do you ever sit alone and read a novel or magazine?

\*Do you ever take trips/vacations/retreats by yourself?

The majority of the respondents indicated that some kind of entertainment sound system was on in their homes most of the time. Half stated such devices were turned on while traveling. The majority also indicated they sometimes take walks by themselves, and sit alone and daydream or read. Fifteen respondents indicated they never take trips, vacations, or retreats alone.

Quality of lifestyle. The writer asked the respondents the following questions to determine their satisfaction with their lifestyles:

\*Do you ever feel the need to get away from the pressures of your daily schedule?

\*Do you ever feel like you do not have enough time to yourself?

\*Do you ever feel like your life is out of control?

\*Do you feel like people/circumstances/schedules are constantly making demands on your time?

\*Do you feel the need to slow the pace of your life?

\*Do you feel the need to put more order/structure into your life?

\*How would you rate your life on a day-by-day basis?

The majority of the respondents indicated they periodically felt the above needs. Fourteen said they sometimes needed to get away from the pressure of their daily schedules. Thirteen indicated they sometimes did not have enough time to themselves. Twelve felt there were periodically too many demands on their time and that they needed to slow the pace of their lives. Nine felt that their lives were sometimes out of control and that they needed more order or structure.

In the rating of their daily lives, the respondents were equally divided. Seven indicated they stayed busy and did not have much spare time. Seven indicated they experienced a good balance between work and leisure. Only one respondent felt overworked and extremely busy. Another felt his or her schedule was not busy enough.

#### The Conclusions from the Data

Several conclusions may be drawn from the pre-test data. Four of those conclusions relate to the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude.

(1) The respondents have already incorporated a minimal to moderate amount of silence and solitude into their lives. The majority indicate they participate in activities conducive to silence and solitude: sitting alone and daydreaming or reading, taking walks alone, and having some kind of devotional time. The degree to which

the respondents connect these activities with silence and solitude and the degree to which they are intentionally seeking spiritual growth through the discipline are not known.

(2) While the respondents experience small amounts of silence and solitude, they nevertheless live in a fairly constant state of noise and busyness. Noise in their homes from the television, stereo, or some other entertainment medium seems common with the majority. Half experience a similar noise level from the radio or cassette player in their automobiles. Most interact with people for the majority of the day. Work or preparations for work consumes much of their time.

(3) The respondents need to reduce the noise and busyness levels in their lives and intentionally increase the amount of silence and solitude. The majority indicate that there are times when they feel dissatisfied with the quality of their lifestyles. They sometimes perceive their lives to be out of control, dictated by people, circumstances, and schedules. They express the need to get away periodically from these demanding factors. Most express the desire to slow the pace of their lives, and put more structure into them. Some feel they do not experience enough time alone.

(4) The respondents appear unable on their own to reduce the noise and busyness levels in their lives and increase the amount of silence and solitude. They recognize the value of the discipline. They rate quiet time as one of the two most important activities in their day. Their attempts at prayer, Bible-reading, and other rituals attest to the value they place on quiet time. But the disciplined practice of the rituals continues to elude several of them. Some

appear inconsistent in the practice of a quiet time. Some indicate they pray or read the Bible only when it is convenient. Most set aside no specific place nor time for the practice of silence and solitude. Occupational and family concerns seem to dictate their schedules.

The study revealed that the respondents need some type of structured program which will guide them into a more disciplined practice of silence and solitude. The intent of that program would be to deepen the respondents' spiritual lives and lead them into a closer relationship with Christ. With that goal in mind, the group undertook the project as outlined in the thesis statement.

#### The Scope and Limitations of the Project

The writer limited the project to a group of volunteer participants within the Summerville United Methodist Church, Phenix City, Alabama. All conclusions must be understood within the context of this limited setting.

Following the recommendation of the Congregational Reflection Group, this writer informed the members of the nature of the project through pulpit announcements and notices in the church newsletter. He solicited all members' participation. Those who participated became members of the small group. They filled out the pre-test questionnaire, responded to the sermon series, participated in the small group, and filled out the post-test questionnaire.

The project took place over a twelve-week period from January 17, 1989, through April 11, 1989. Sixteen members of the Summerville United Methodist Church participated. These persons completed the

pre-test questionnaire on January 17, 1989. During the subsequent twelve Sunday morning worship services, they responded to a sermon on the theme of silence and solitude. They met in a small group format each Tuesday night to consider the theme of the previous Sunday and participate in the exercise of silence and solitude.

The writer made no formal attempt to control extraneous factors that could influence the participants' spiritual growth. He simply encouraged the participants to respond to the biblical and dialogical stimuli, and to cultivate the discipline of silence and solitude in their lives.

The theoretical model of action/reflection informed the project/dissertation format. The sermon series and study manual provided the opportunity for reflection on the discipline of silence and solitude. The small group provided the supportive setting in which the participants could engage in the practice of the discipline. The action/reflection model is the educational model adopted by Asbury Theological Seminary for use in its Doctor of Ministry program.<sup>47</sup>

The Wesleyan/Methodist tradition served as the historical model for the format of the project/dissertation. The early Wesleyan/Methodist tradition linked congregational participation and small group involvement. The early Methodists discovered this model to be an effective means of spiritual growth. A. Skevington Wood, in John Wesley: The Burning Heart, refers to the importance of the class meetings within the larger Methodist societies. He notes that "these

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<sup>47</sup> Program Guidelines, Doctor of Ministry Program, Jan. 1986, Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore.

distinctive groups provided the convert with the very thing that was most needed to ensure steady growth in grace."<sup>48</sup>

The Implementation of the Sermon Series  
and Small Group Experiences

On Sunday, January 22, 1989, the writer preached the first sermon in the twelve-week series. Each subsequent Sunday during the worship service, he preached on the theme of "Spiritual Growth Through Silence and Solitude." The writer delivered the sermons with the entire congregation in mind, but he felt additional concern for the small group participants who were present in the congregation. The writer wanted the sermons to motivate the small group participants in two areas: (1) to stimulate personal study and discussion in the small group; and (2) to equip the participants for the actual practice of silence and solitude.

On Tuesday, January 24, 1989, the small group met for the first time. Meetings continued each Tuesday night through April 11, 1989. The participants agreed on the two following rules: (1) each member would arrive no later than seven o'clock (the starting time for each session); and (2) no session would last longer than one hour. Each session began with a period of silence. The leader gave instruction in a form of Christian meditation, after which the members practiced the form of meditation. The silent meditation period lasted for five minutes during the initial session. The writer gradually increased its length to twenty minutes by the final session. After each

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<sup>48</sup> A. Skevington Wood, John Wesley: The Burning Heart (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 192.



meditation period, the writer asked for reactions and feelings from the members. The writer solicited this feedback in order to be sensitive to the difficulties the members may have been having in the practice of silence and solitude. The group spent the remainder of the hour discussing the sermon from the previous Sunday, using the study manual as a guide. The session concluded with the members standing, joining hands, and singing the following chorus based on Isaiah 40:31:

They who wait upon the Lord shall renew thier  
strength,  
They shall mount up with wings as eagles;  
They shall run and not be weary,  
They shall walk and not faint;  
Teach us, Lord; teach us, Lord, to wait.

The first issue the group faced was defining silence and solitude. One participant raised this issue in the first meeting by asking, "What do we do in this kind of group--just sit around and look at each other?". James Griffis points out that most people in twentieth-century America view silence as a passive state, an empty void where nothing happens and little is accomplished.<sup>49</sup> That perspective seems misinformed. "Silence is not just a negative void."<sup>50</sup> It is an active state.

To be silent is an act.... To be silent means to attend, to pay attention to another. To be silent means to listen and hear; it means to reflect upon what is and what is said. It is, in other words, an intense form of communication through which we can enter<sup>51</sup> into communion with another person and with God.

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<sup>49</sup> James E. Griffis, A Silent Path to God (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 22.

<sup>50</sup> Jane Howard, "Quiet, Please!", Life, 3 Dec. 1971: 78.

<sup>51</sup> Griffis, 22.

Henri Nouwen defines silence as "primarily a quality of the heart that leads to ever-growing charity."<sup>52</sup>

Silence is closely related to solitude. "Solitude is choosing to be alone and to dwell on our experience in isolation from other human beings." In solitude, one intentionally withdraws from interaction with other individuals and from everything that results from that interaction.<sup>53</sup> The solitude does not constitute a rejection of people. It constitutes a rejection of the superficialities of much of human interaction. It reflects a renunciation of "the deceptive fictions and inadequate symbols which tend to take the place of genuine social unity."<sup>54</sup>

Silence and solitude, although distinct, often appear as one entity. Dallas Willard affirms that "silence and solitude go hand in hand.... Just as silence is needed to make solitude real, so solitude is needed to make the discipline of silence complete."<sup>55</sup> Henri Nouwen contends that "silence completes and intensifies solitude."<sup>56</sup> Richard J. Foster declares that "without silence there is no solitude."<sup>57</sup> The two cannot be separated, especially when viewed as inner dimensions of the individual.

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<sup>52</sup> Nouwen, Heart, 47.

<sup>53</sup> Willard, 160.

<sup>54</sup> James Finley, Merton's Palace of Nowhere: A Search for God Through Awareness of the True Self (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1978), 47.

<sup>55</sup> Willard, 163.

<sup>56</sup> Nouwen, Heart, 29.

<sup>57</sup> Foster, Celebration, 86.

Richard J. Foster points out an important aspect of silence and solitude. The term does not always imply that one is without noise or alone. It often refers to an attitude of the heart, a state of calm and peacefulness within the individual, regardless of the noise level, busyness, or number of people present. Margie Morris describes this aspect of the discipline: "Solitude is as much a state of mind as a physical condition."<sup>58</sup> Maxie Dunnam echoes the same thought: "There is a solitude of the heart which can be maintained despite crowds and clatter."<sup>59</sup> According to Henri Nouwen, the silence and solitude of the heart often constitutes the most significant kind of solitude.<sup>60</sup> This kind of silence and solitude allows the individual to function in society without being disconcerted by the demands and pressures of the society.

The definition of the discipline as both an outward and inward dimension had two significant implications for the group. First, it called attention to the need of the participants to be alone in a physical sense, without noise or other persons present, for a period of time each day. The writer encouraged aloneness through means such as taking walks, turning off the entertainment sound media at home or while driving, and the development of a daily quiet time for prayer and Bible-reading. To facilitate the development of the quiet time,

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<sup>58</sup> Margie Morris, "Alone with God," Teacher in the Church Today, July 1989: 18.

<sup>59</sup> Dunnam, Spiritual Disciplines, 120.

<sup>60</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 37.

the group leader presented each participant with A Diary of Private Prayer by John Baillie. This book, a classic among devotional literature, offers morning and evening prayers for a period of thirty days, plus prayers for Sunday morning and evening.<sup>61</sup>

The second implication of the definition was that it introduced meditation as a means to inward silence. The word meditation comes from the Latin word "meditari," meaning "to reflect upon, ponder, or think about." "Meditari" comes from the Indo-European root "med," which meant "to measure." Meditation, therefore, "is a way of taking the measure of our existence and the mystery of our being." William Moremen quotes Morton Kelsey's definition of meditation: "[It] is an attempt to provide the soul with the proper environment in which to grow and become."<sup>62</sup> Bradley Hanson, in The Call of Silence, considers the relationship between meditation and spiritual growth:

This does not mean that a regular practice of meditative prayer automatically produces a deeper relationship with Christ. Christ cannot be maneuvered and manipulated in mechanical fashion. But meditative prayer has the potential to deepen one's relationship with Christ. In this respect, it is like attending Sunday worship. Going to church does not automatically bring one into communion with Christ, but it has the potential for doing that by bringing a person into the context where Christians are gathered.... By going to church, people are putting themselves in a position where it is more likely that God will speak to them than if they stay home sleeping or reading the Sunday paper. Praying meditatively

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<sup>61</sup> John Baillie, A Diary of Private Prayer (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1986), 9-135.

<sup>62</sup> William M. Moremen, Developing Spiritually and Professionally (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 34.

is also placing oneself in a position in which one's relationship with Christ is likely to be enriched.<sup>63</sup>

The small group at Summerville focused on three forms of Christian meditation during its periods of silence: (1) the Jesus Prayer; (2) the Breath Prayer; and (3) Centering Prayer. The Jesus Prayer is a simple form of prayer in which the individual repeats the words: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." A longer version is: "Lord, have mercy on me, I am a sinful man; Christ, have mercy on me, I am a sinful man."<sup>64</sup> The Jesus Prayer is an ancient prayer based on Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonian Christians to "pray continually" (I Thess. 5:17). The prayer also finds its basis in the cries for mercy which the people often addressed to Jesus. The prayer originated with the Desert Fathers. It has become a classic form of prayer and is practiced today, especially in the Eastern Orthodox Church.<sup>65</sup> The goal of the Jesus Prayer is, through silent repetition, to lead the practitioner into an unconscious turning toward Christ.<sup>66</sup>

The ancient monastic school of Hesychasm utilized the short version of the Jesus Prayer--"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."<sup>67</sup> The Hesychasts' major contribution to the

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<sup>63</sup> Bradley Hanson, The Call of Silence (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 115-116.

<sup>64</sup> Carretto, 49.

<sup>65</sup> Tilden Edwards, Living Simply Through the Day (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 91-92.

<sup>66</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, The Other Side of Silence (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 114.

<sup>67</sup> Cummings, 312.

development of the prayer was to connect it to the rhythm of breathing. The connection of the prayer to breathing produced an "inward stillness," or silence.<sup>68</sup>

Theophan the Recluse, the Russian spiritual father of the nineteenth century, considered the Jesus Prayer important in developing one's spiritual life. Theophan stated there are two ways to approach God: the active way and the contemplative way. The active way is the way of ascetic labor, while the contemplative way is the way of the Jesus Prayer. "By the first way, the soul becomes purified and so receives God: by the second way, the God of whom the soul becomes aware himself burns away every impurity and thus comes to dwell in the purified soul." Theophan believed that the way of contemplation, the way of the Jesus Prayer, was a quicker and more effective way to God than the way of activity. He based his instruction on the teaching of St. Gregory of Sinai: "God is gained either by activity or work, or by the art of invoking the name of Jesus."<sup>69</sup>

An unnamed nineteenth-century Russian peasant is one of the more renown practitioners of the Jesus Prayer. This simple peasant traveled throughout Russia carrying only a Bible and some bread and salt. He prayed the Jesus Prayer thousands of times each day. Through continuous repetition, he succeeded in uniting the prayer with his breathing and heartbeat, until he was able to live a life of

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<sup>68</sup> Kelsey, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Basil M. Pennington, Centering Prayer (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1980), 32.

continuous prayer.<sup>70</sup>

Morton Kelsey contends that anyone can pray the Jesus Prayer at anytime.

As one awakens and goes to sleep, one repeats this prayer; while working on the job or playing, one repeats it; and in times of pleasure or of personal struggle, one keeps repeating the prayer over and over within oneself, like the beating of the heart. The hope is that not only the words but the presence and spiritual reality of Jesus will permeate every aspect of one's being.<sup>71</sup>

The Breath Prayer constitutes the second form of Christian meditation on which the group focused. Ron Del Bene and Herb Montgomery define the Breath Prayer as "a short, simple, ancient prayer of praise and petition" which grew out of the Psalms.<sup>72</sup> Like the Jesus Prayer, the Breath Prayer is a single-sentence form of prayer connected to the rhythm of one's breathing. The Breath Prayer, however, is more personalized than the Jesus Prayer because it "arises from individual need."<sup>73</sup> Claude Whitehead, Bishop's Assistant for Spiritual Formation, Birmingham Episcopal Area of The United Methodist Church, gives instruction on praying the Breath Prayer:

Close your eyes and envision Jesus before you.  
Hear Jesus asking what your greatest need is.  
Address Jesus in the way most familiar to you.  
Ask him to meet your need. If you want peace,  
for example, say, "Jesus, give me peace."<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, "Unceasing Prayer," America 139 (1978): 46-47.

<sup>71</sup> Kelsey, 114-115.

<sup>72</sup> Bene and Montgomery, Breath, 27-30.

<sup>73</sup> Bene and Montgomery, Breath, 29.

<sup>74</sup> Claude Whitehead, interview with author, 2 Dec. 1988.

Like the Jesus Prayer, the Breath Prayer may be prayed in all situations until, like one's breath, it becomes an unconscious effort, creating an inner stillness.

Centering Prayer constitutes the third form of Christian meditation on which the group focused. Stephen Kurtz defines centering as "the process by which we move from the agitated periphery of our lives...to a silent interior space...."<sup>75</sup> The concept of Centering Prayer originated with the Trappist Monks in St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. The monks developed the form of prayer from suggestions discovered in The Cloud of Unknowing, an anonymous fourteenth-century work on the practice of the spiritual life.<sup>76</sup>

Centering Prayer emphasizes three stages:

1. With eyes closed, the practitioner becomes quiet before the Lord.
2. A word arises from deep within the soul, expressing the practitioner's relationship with God. The practitioner repeats the word for approximately twenty minutes.
3. At the conclusion of the meditation, the practitioner prays the Lord's Prayer or some other prayer as a means of "grounding," or bringing the practitioner back to complete awareness.<sup>77</sup>

The benefit of Centering Prayer is that it allows the practitioner to let go of distracting thoughts and images. Charles Cummings writes:

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<sup>75</sup> Stephen A. Kurtz, "Silence," Commonweal 111 (1984): 140.

<sup>76</sup> Moremen, 39.

<sup>77</sup> Edwards, Living Simply, 96-97.



Instead of becoming involved with these passing images, we remain anchored in the depths of our being by means of the prayer-word. If the prayer-word drops away and leaves us silent before the living God, then the word has done its work.<sup>78</sup>

The centering process is not achieved easily. The human center has "a very small circumference" which most people never find "except in great moments."<sup>79</sup> Richard J. Foster contends this is because "most of us live such fractured and fragmented lives that collectedness is a foreign world to us." Foster quotes Romano Guardini: "When we try to compose ourselves, unrest doubles in intensity, not unlike the manner in which at night, when we try to sleep, cares or desires assail us with a force that they do not possess during the day."<sup>80</sup> But, according to Foster, when one does find the quiet center within, several things happen:

1. There is a sense of surrender to God. The practitioner surrenders all possessiveness, worries and concerns, even good intentions.
2. There is a movement toward repentance and confession.
3. There is an acceptance of the way God deals with humanity.<sup>81</sup>

In Getting Through to the Wonderful You: A Christian Alternative to Transcendental Meditation, Charlie Shedd considers a form of Centering Prayer called Word Focusing. In this form of prayer, the

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<sup>78</sup> Cummings, 316.

<sup>79</sup> Ronald V. Wells, Spiritual Disciplines for Everyday Living (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1982), 60.

<sup>80</sup> Foster, Meditative Prayer, 14.

<sup>81</sup> Foster, Meditative Prayer, 14-17.

practitioner studies the meaning of the prayer-word using a tool such as a dictionary. One then "sets aside a regular time for meditating on the word," retaining it "until it has done its thing...."<sup>82</sup> Shedd suggests using Word Focusing during one's early morning quiet time. The purpose of Word Focusing is "to relate our mind to the mind of God and tune our spirits to his Spirit."<sup>83</sup>

Father Silouan, the Russian monk who lived in the monastery on Mount Athos, is one of the better-known practitioners of Centering Prayer. "At the end of his long and busy day as a dock master, [Father Silouan] would retire to his office near the abandoned pier, pull his monk's hat down over his eyes and ears, and center into the awesome presence of God...."<sup>84</sup>

The Summerville small group used the Jesus Prayer, the Breath Prayer, and Centering Prayer in two ways. The prayers served as meditation techniques which enabled the participants to separate from the busyness and noise of the outer world and concentrate on group dynamics. The prayers also served as training techniques through which the participants could practice meaningful silence and solitude on an individual basis outside of group interaction. The writer encouraged the participants to incorporate the silence and solitude of meditation into their daily schedules.

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<sup>82</sup> Charlie W. Shedd, Getting Through to the Wonderful You: A Christian Alternative to Transcendental Meditation (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976), 56.

<sup>83</sup> Shedd, 63.

<sup>84</sup> Pennington, Centering Prayer, 16-17.

The writer gave instruction to the group in one other use of silence and solitude: the discipline as a vehicle of intercessory prayer. The need for this aspect of the discipline grew out of the group's desire to pray for the Summerville Church. Several members expressed the desire to pray for the church, but indicated they felt overwhelmed in the face of so many needs. This writer gave instruction in a non-verbal form of intercessory prayer. In this form of meditation, the intercessor envisions the need, situation, or person being bathed in the radiance of Christ. The intercessor does not explain the need, situation, or person to Christ, nor offer any solutions. He or she simply holds the prayer request before Christ in the assurance that Christ understands the problem and holds the solution.<sup>85</sup> The writer suggested the group intercede for the Summerville Church by using silent intercession to pray for the various church committees and individual members.

Using the aforementioned forms of Christian meditation and silent intercession, and using the study manual to explore biblical examples of silence and solitude, the small group participants sought to heighten their understanding of silence and solitude and increase its practice in their lives. The goal of the twelve-week experience was a deepened spirituality. The writer hoped that the group participants, through their enhanced personal relationship with the Lord, would serve as catalysts for curing the acedic condition of the Summerville Church.

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<sup>85</sup> Claude Whitehead, interview with author, 2 Dec. 1988.

### The Evaluation of the Project

The writer will consider the evaluation of the project in the final chapter of the dissertation. The evaluation will include the following elements: (1) the compilation of the post-test data; (2) the comparison of the post-test data and the pre-test data; (3) the conclusions based on the data; (4) a reconsideration of the thesis statement; and (5) the recommendations for future ministry that grew out of the small group project with silence and solitude.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL REFLECTION

This chapter explores the biblical and historical foundations of the discipline of silence and solitude and examines the role that silence and solitude plays in the Old and New Testaments. This chapter also interprets the discipline in early and recent Christian history and considers the discipline of silence in the history of other religions.

#### The Biblical Reflection

The theme of silence and solitude weaves its way through the entire course of biblical history. From the stillness of pre-creation chaos in Genesis 1:1 to the great silence in heaven of Revelation 8:1, silence and solitude abounds. Oswald Chambers observes:

The Holy Scripture is everywhere so full of apartness and aloneness and solitude; of lodges in the wilderness, and of shut doors in the city; of early mornings and late nights, and lonely night watches; of Sabbath days and holidays, and all such asylums of spiritual retreat.<sup>1</sup>

Numerous key words in Scripture reflect the theme of silence and solitude: "silence," "quiet," and "alone," and their derivatives. The words "silence" and "silent" are used 43 times in the Old And New

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<sup>1</sup> Oswald Chambers, The Discipline of Loneliness (Cincinnati: God's Revivalist Office, 1930), 22.

Testaments of the King James Version.<sup>2</sup> The word "quiet" and its derivatives are used 46 times in both testaments.<sup>3</sup> And the word "alone" is used a total of 104 times.<sup>4</sup>

The usages of the key words vary. Silence frequently signals the presence of God, as in the command of the prophet Zechariah: "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation" (Zech. 2:13). In the book of Job, Eliphaz the Temanite describes to Job his vision of God. At the climax of the vision, when the image of God appears, Eliphaz declares, "There was silence..." (Job 4:16). The prophet Habakkuk writes, "But the Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him" (Hab. 2:20).

Silence in the Bible sometimes denotes the despair and hopelessness that results from the absence of God. The writer of Lamentations mourns the destruction of Jerusalem and the conquest of its people by the Babylonians. He declares, "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence..." (Lam. 2:10). The writer of I Samuel declares, "...the wicked shall be silent in darkness..." (I Sam. 2:9). The Psalmist repeatedly echoes the theme of silent despair:

Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have  
called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed,  
and let them be silent in the grave (Ps. 31:17).

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<sup>2</sup> James Strong, Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980), 1248.

<sup>3</sup> Strong, 1108.

<sup>4</sup> Strong, 64.

Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock; be not  
silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I  
become like them that go down into the pit  
(Ps. 28:1).

This thou hast seen, O Lord: keep not silence:  
O Lord, be not far from me (Ps. 35:22).

The writer of Proverbs correlates silence and wisdom. The wise  
person, the writer declares, maintains silence:

A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor,  
but a man of understanding holds his tongue  
(Prov. 11:12).

...Wisdom is found in those who take advice  
(Prov. 13:10).

The writer of Proverbs contends that a multiplicity of words creates  
difficulties: "The words of a man's mouth are deep waters..."  
(Prov. 18:4).

In the book of Acts, the people respond with awe-filled silence  
upon hearing the word of God. Luke declares that "all the multitude  
kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul" as the two men  
declared the signs and wonders God had enabled them to perform among  
the Gentiles (Acts 15:12). Luke records that the Jewish mob responded  
in a similar manner when Paul defended himself against their  
allegations in Acts 21 and 22: "...Paul stood on the stairs, and  
beckoned with his hands to the people. And when there was a great  
silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue..." (Acts 21:40).  
Luke testifies that the more the Jewish mob listened to Paul's  
presentation of the Gospel, the quieter they became (Acts 22:2).

In the epistles, Paul utilizes silence as a means of maintaining  
discipline in the church. He commands the Corinthians to speak in  
tongues in a worship service only when an interpreter is present.

"But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church..." (I Cor. 14:28). Paul further admonishes the Corinthian women to maintain silence in the church: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted for them to speak..." (I Cor. 14:34). Paul instructs Timothy to follow the same position concerning women in the church. He writes, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence (I Tim. 2:11-12).

The use of the word "quiet" in the Scripture points to another aspect of silence and solitude. Quietness in Scripture goes beyond the mere absence of noise. In the Old Testament, the term denotes peace, security, and rest. The writer of Judges describes the people of Laish as "quiet and secure" (Judg. 18:7-27). These people had no need for a ruler; they were not at war; they lived peaceful lives. When the writer of Chronicles records that "the land was quiet" during the reign of Asa (II Chr. 14:1-5), he is referring to a period in Israel's history when war had ceased, cities were built, idol worship was discouraged, and the people were encouraged to seek the God of their fathers: a time of peace and security. The prophet Isaiah speaks of a time when "the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet..." (Isa. 14:7). Jeremiah describes the return of the captives as a time when "Jacob shall...rest, and be quiet..." (Jer. 30:10).

The New Testament builds upon the Old Testament concept of quietness. The New Testament, like the Old Testament, alludes to the quietness of national and political peace. Paul instructs Timothy to pray for leaders and rulers so that their people "may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (I Tim. 2:2). But the



New Testament expands the concept to include personal and inner peace as well as national and political peace. Paul admonishes the brethren in Thessalonica to "...study to be quiet, and to do your own business..." (I Thess. 4:11).

The theme of silence and solitude in the Bible extends beyond key word usage. Silence and solitude manifests itself in the lives of many of the saints and in situations and circumstances where the key words are not used.

The event of creation began on a note of silence. "And the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). The Living Bible substitutes the word "brooding" for "moving." It paints a picture of a deep stillness and silence where the Spirit of God, in the darkness of pre-creation, was moving slowly about, looking, observing, thinking, feeling, sensing, pondering. Eventually, God spoke, and the cosmos sprang into existence. But even God's words were heralded by his contemplative silence. The account of creation establishes the importance of silence and solitude.

Throughout the Old Testament, God uses silence and solitude as the instrument of creation. He uses it to fashion, not only the cosmos, but the lives and characters of his people.

Exodus 3:1-5 recounts Moses' first encounter with God. "Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God" (Ex. 3:1). God led Moses into the desert. God chose the solitude of a mountain as the place of divine/human encounter. God used the silence and solitude of the

wilderness to mold Moses' character--to give Moses the spiritual depth and courage he would need one day to stand before Pharaoh and declare, "Let my people go."

God forged the character of many of the prophets and patriarchs on the anvil of silence and solitude. In Genesis 32, Jacob wrestled with the Lord all night (Gen. 32:24). Prior to the struggle, Jacob sent his family and "everything that he had" away in order to be alone (Gen. 32:23). In his aloneness, he struggled and prevailed, and received God's blessings. Jacob's old nature died. Israel's new nature emerged.

I Kings 19 relates the account of God using the loneliness of the desert to nurture his servant. Elijah confronted and defeated the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. Ahab informed Jezebel of Elijah's victory, and Jezebel threatened the prophet's life. In a state of panic, Elijah fled to Beer-sheba. I Kings 19:4 states, "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness...." Elijah chose not to flee to the city where he might lose himself in the crowd. He chose not to flee to friends who might offer consolation and safety. He chose to flee into the solitude of the wilderness. In that wilderness, the angel strengthened him and the voice of God whispered in his ear.

Jeremiah longed for the renewal that solitude brings. The prophet cried, "O that I had in the wilderness a wayfarer's lodging place, that I might leave my people and go away from them" (Jer. 9:2). Hosea understood that God would nurture his people in the lonely wilderness: "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her" (Hos. 2:14). The prophet Isaiah beheld God in the stillness of the temple: "...I saw

the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up..." (Isa. 6:1).

Thomas Merton points out that God uses solitude as a formative power, not just in the lives of the prophets and patriarchs, but in the lives of all people. The Lord drew the Hebrew slaves out of the noise and clatter of Egypt and into the stillness of the desert. There, in solitude, he nurtured them and forged them into a mighty nation. Merton notes that the Israelites could have reached the Promised Land in a matter of months had they journeyed straight to it. But "God's plan was that they should learn to love him in the wilderness, and that they should always look upon the time in the desert as the idyllic time of their life with him alone."<sup>5</sup>

These experiences justify the prophet's cry, "In silence and hope are formed the strength of the saints" (Isa. 30:15). They explain the wisdom of the preacher's words, "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Eccl. 3:7). They vindicate the Psalmist's declaration, "For God alone my souls waits in silence; from him comes my salvation" (Ps. 62:1).

The theme of silence and solitude resonates strongly throughout the New Testament. John the Baptist builds the bridge between the Old Testament and New Testament. The prophet Isaiah speaks of "a voice crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isa. 40:3). That prophecy finds fulfillment in John the Baptist. Before taking up his public ministry, John the Baptist lived in the wilderness. Mark states, "John the

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Cudahy, Inc., 1958), 18.

baptizer appeared in the wilderness..." (Mark 1:14). The Gospel writer further reveals the austerity of John's lifestyle: "Now John wore clothes with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey" (Mark 1:6). The wilderness experience of John the Baptist appears similar to the wilderness experiences of the Old Testament prophets. Through the asceticism and aloneness of the desert, God burned the prophet's commission into John's soul.

The discipline of silence and solitude characterized the ministry of Jesus. The Gospel narratives note repeatedly that Jesus withdrew from the crowds for various reasons. Matthew reveals that Jesus sought the solitude of the desert at the beginning of his public ministry. Following his baptism, Jesus withdrew from public life for a period of forty days. He went alone into the wilderness where he confronted and conquered the temptations placed before him by Satan (Matt. 4:1-11).

Jesus frequently withdrew to lonely places following encounters with the multitudes. Matthew reports that he "went up on the mountain by himself to pray" following the feeding of the five-thousand (Matt. 14:23). Mark records that Jesus got up before day "and went out to a lonely place" for prayer (Mark 1:35). On the evening before this withdrawal, Jesus healed the sick and demon-possessed. Luke declares that Jesus "withdrew to the wilderness and prayed" following other numerous healings (Luke 5:16).

Other circumstances and events prompted Jesus to withdraw from the mainstream of daily life. Following the execution of John the Baptist by King Herod, Jesus "withdrew from there in a boat to a

lonely place apart" (Matt. 14:13). He withdrew to the mountain for prayer before choosing his twelve apostles (Luke 6:12). As the cross loomed on the horizon, Jesus sought the encouragement of Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-9). And on the eve of the crucifixion, he sought comfort within the recesses of the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46).

J. Oswald Sanders comments on Jesus' practice of silence and solitude: "It was our Lord's habit to seek retirement...."<sup>6</sup> Jesus' retirement, however, served as more than a retreat from the demands of public life. It functioned as the cutting edge of Jesus' prayer life. David Douglas writes, "The country beyond the edge of civilization was the setting Jesus chose for prayer."<sup>7</sup> Orlo Strunk declares, "The Gospels imply that Jesus found it necessary to be alone at times, to withdraw from the hubbub of the world, to pray in the silence that often accompanies solitude."<sup>8</sup> C. F. Andrews notes that Jesus often "spent the whole night on a mountaintop in prayer, when the tumult of the insistent world had become more and more oppressive."<sup>9</sup> Fay Conlee Oliver attributes Jesus' "heightened spiritual sensitivity" and rich

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<sup>6</sup> J. Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 124.

<sup>7</sup> David W. Douglas, "Wilderness Encounters with Divinity," Christianity Today 25 (20 Nov. 1981): 24.

<sup>8</sup> Orlo Strunk, Jr., "Solitude," Teacher in the Church Today, Mar. 1989: 19.

<sup>9</sup> C. F. Andrews, Christ in the Silence (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1934), 19.

"inner life" to the time he spent alone with God in prayer.<sup>10</sup>

Mark documents another important reference to solitude: "And [Jesus] said to [his apostles], 'Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest awhile'" (Mark 6:31). Two events prompted this command: (1) the execution of John the baptist, and (2) the fatigue and stress of ministry. Mark records that, prior to the death of John the Baptist, Jesus sent the apostles out in pairs to minister (Mark 6:7-13). The apostles preached the Gospel, exorcised demons, and healed the sick. They needed the renewal of solitude. Jesus incorporated the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude into his own life and ministry. He also recommended that his followers incorporate it into their lives and ministries.

The spiritual discipline of silence and solitude finds its foundation in the biblical narrative. God uses the discipline in two major ways: (1) to prepare his people for the life of service; and (2) to sustain his people through the difficulties the life of service often involves.

#### The Historical Reflection

Tilden Edwards writes about the practice of silence and solitude in the Bible: "Scripture encouraged the purgative value of such living beyond the force of prevailing social structure: the Hebraic wilderness experience, and those of John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul."<sup>11</sup> Orlo Strunk notes that solitude in Scripture as a means of faith development

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<sup>10</sup> Fay Conlee Oliver, Christian Growth Through Meditation (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976), 89.

<sup>11</sup> Tilden Edwards, Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 51.

began to take shape in the lifestyle of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> From these origins in Scripture, the discipline of silence and solitude grew into a widely-accepted and respected practice in the Christian Church. The discipline became so commonly observed in the history of the Christian religion that Thomas a' Kempis declares, "The greatest saints avoided, when they could, the society of men, and did rather choose to live for God in secret."<sup>13</sup>

### Early Historical Reflection

The early Desert Fathers pioneered silence and solitude. These Christian men and women recognized the obstacles society placed in the way of spiritual development. Near the end of the third century, some Christians began to abandon society for the austerity of the Syrian, Egyptian, and Palestinian deserts. This desert migration that began as a stream in the third century rose to a flood in the fourth and fifth centuries, as more believers gave up on civilization as the place to discover God. At the movement's height, "as many as twenty thousand people lived in the desert alone or in monastic groups."<sup>14</sup>

Henri Nouwen explains the Desert Father's motivation:

The Desert Fathers...were Christians who searched for a new way of martyrdom. Once the persecutions [of the church] had ceased, it was no longer possible to witness for Christ by following him as a blood witness. Yet the end of the persecution did not mean that the world had accepted the ideals of Christ and altered its ways; the world continued to prefer the darkness to the light.

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<sup>12</sup> Strunk, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 42.

<sup>14</sup> Edwards, 50.

But if the world was no longer the enemy of the Christian, then the Christian had become the enemy of the dark world. The flight to the desert was the way<sub>15</sub> to escape a tempting conformity to the world.

Thomas Merton states in his introduction to Wisdom of the Desert:

"Society...was regarded by the Desert Fathers as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life."<sup>16</sup> The Desert Fathers, in the loneliness and austerity of the wilderness, discovered their path to God: "fuge, terche, et quisset"--silence, solitude, and inner peace.<sup>17</sup>

St. Anthony pioneered the Desert Fathers' movement. St. Anthony was not the first Christian to renounce civilization and seek God in the wilderness; but his lifestyle and ideals epitomized the desert tradition. Anthony was born in 251 A. D. to Egyptian peasants. At the age of eighteen, he heard in a church service the words of Jesus: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matt. 19:21). He believed Jesus was speaking directly to him, and so he withdrew to the edge of his village where he worked as a simple laborer. Anthony later withdrew into the wilderness, where for twenty years he lived in complete solitude.<sup>18</sup> Anthony lived a life of

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<sup>15</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Way of the Heart (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Richard J. Foster, Freedom of Simplicity (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 56.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon MacDonald, Ordering Your Private World (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 126.

<sup>18</sup> Nouwen, Heart, 7-8.



fasting, prayer, labor, and solitude in the desert. A walled-in cell in an abandoned fort served as his home. When Anthony came out of the desert, "his soul was pure:"

...neither contracted by grief, dissipated by pleasure, nor pervaded by jollity or dejection. He was completely under control, guided by reason.... He performed healings, exorcisms, comforting, reconciling.... To all he was a father and guide.<sup>19</sup>

The Dead Sea Scrolls reveal additional information about the nature of desert communities. These scrolls reveal the existence of the Essene and Qumran communities of later Judaism. The Essene and Qumran communities probably formed one part of a pre-Christian desert movement. The Essenes lived in loosely-knit villages and communities. Pliny in his Natural History locates them on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. J. A. Ziesler states the reason these two communities fled civilization for the solitude of the desert:

...they were not trying to save their own souls by fleeing the world, the flesh, and the devil. They were trying to be a people prepared for their God.<sup>20</sup>

Many individuals and groups throughout church history have practiced the discipline of silence and solitude. St. Benedict, born at Nursia in 480 A. D., founded western monasticism. He taught and observed "the virtues of silence, hospitality, manual work, humility, obedience, and poverty."<sup>21</sup> In the seventh century, John of the Ladder

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<sup>19</sup> Edwards, 52.

<sup>20</sup> J. A. Ziesler, Christian Asceticism (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), 20-25.

<sup>21</sup> Sisa M. Sagar, "Asceticism in the Four Gospels' (M. Th. Thesis, Asbury Theological Seminary, 1950), p. 13.

lived as a solitary for forty years atop Mount Sinai.<sup>22</sup> William of St. Thierry (1085-1148) believed solitude to be "the fairest part of the Christian religion" and "the cell [to be] like heaven."<sup>23</sup> The twelfth century Cistercian father Aelred of Rievaulx (1109-1167) insisted on silence for the recluse:

She must sit alone, imposing silence on her tongue that her spirit may speak; believing that when she is alone she is never alone, for she is with Christ....<sup>24</sup>

Aelred likened the recluse to Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus and listened.<sup>25</sup>

The monastic order to which Aelred belonged, the Cistercians, recognized the value of silence and solitude. The Cistercian order came into existence on Palm Sunday, 1098, when Robert of Molesme and his followers abandoned the Benedictine monastery in which they lived. They retired to the forest at Citeaux intending to follow Benedict's Rule of simplicity and austerity "to the letter." Solitude became a significant emphasis among these early Cistercian fathers. They saw silence and solitude, along with the other aspects of the simple lifestyle, as a means of drawing close to God. The prayer of Cistercian monk Isaac de l'Etoile summarizes the role of the discipline of silence and solitude in the early Cistercian monasteries:

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<sup>22</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life (Garden City: Image Books, 1974), 15.

<sup>23</sup> William O. Paulsell, "Cistercians on the Solitary Life," Studies in Formative Spirituality 1 (May 1980): 219.

<sup>24</sup> Paulsell, 220.

<sup>25</sup> Paulsell, 221.

O Lord, here solitude has been piled upon solitude and silence has been added to silence. For in order that we may be more able and accustomed to speak with Thee, we are silent with one another.<sup>26</sup>

St. Bernard declares that the Cistercian order consists of five significant elements: (1) silence, (2) fasting, (3) vigils, (4) prayer, and (5) manual labor. The Cistercian monk rises early in the morning (around two o'clock) and chants the Canonical Office of Vigils. He continues in meditation and recitation of Offices until dawn, at which time he says Mass and receives the Holy Sacrament. The monk then gives himself to meditative reading until breakfast. Breakfast for the Cistercian monk consists of bread and coffee, and is followed by more prayers and the daily Chapter. The Chapter is the time of day when all the monks gather for "a spiritual discourse by the Father Abbot and accuse themselves of their faults against the Rule." The daylight hours consist of meditative reading, prayers, Mass, and manual labor. The Cistercian monk puts in two hours of labor in the morning and two-and-one-half hours of labor in the afternoon. His day ends at seven o'clock in the evening with reading and Vespers.<sup>27</sup>

Thomas Merton, the renown Cistercian monk of the twentieth century, describes the Cistercian lifestyle:

The Trappist day remains, on the whole, an arduous one with plenty of hard work and long hours in choir. The monastic setting is one of great simplicity and poverty, in which little thought is given to bodily comfort. The monks are bound by a strict rule of silence. They never converse with one another, and speak only to their Superiors

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas Merton, The Silent Life (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, Inc., 1957), 76-80.

<sup>27</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 84-94.

and then only when necessary. They rarely leave the monastery, and sometimes spend years or indeed a whole lifetime without ever seeing the nearest town. Newspapers and radios are unknown inside the monastery, and only sparse fragments<sup>28</sup> of the world's news reach the ears of the monk.

Among the early church devotees to silence and solitude, none adhered to a stricter regimen than the hermits. Hermits withdraw completely from the world. They separate themselves from other forms of Christian community. "They live a life of prayer and meditation... not subject to the complexities of religious institutionalism, and its vanities...."<sup>29</sup>

Saint Simeon Stylites represents the abuses of silence and solitude sometimes found among the hermits. Saint Simeon founded the order known as the Pillar Hermits. He was expelled from the monastery in which he lived because of his harsh spirit of asceticism and mortification. Following his expulsion, he took up abode atop a six-foot pillar. Saint Simeon added to the pillar over the years, and it finally reached a height of sixty feet. He never descended. His devotees brought him food and other necessities by means of a ladder. From the top of his pillar, Saint Simeon proclaimed the Gospel to the unconverted.<sup>30</sup>

In fifteenth century England, Paul of Thebes (also known as Saint Paul) adopted the lifestyle of the Desert Fathers. Jerome's Life of

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<sup>28</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 94.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Merton, The Monastic Journey (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews, and McMeal, Inc., 1947), 151-159.

<sup>30</sup> Emile Cailliet, Alone at High Noon: Reflections on the Solitary Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 16-17.

Paul reveals that Paul's life, and the lives of those who followed him, consisted of prayer and physical labor. Through simple prayer and hard work, these men kept alive the tradition begun by the Desert Fathers.<sup>31</sup>

Virginia Davis, in "The Rule of Saint Paul," describes the ceremony through which one enters into the hermit's life:

The aspiring hermit came into the bishop's presence carrying with him the garb of a hermit. He knelt before the bishop who questioned him as to his chastity. The hermit then made the oath of profession.... A written form of the profession was signed by the hermit with a cross.

The remainder of the rite was concerned with the blessing of the hermit's garments.... They were simple, consisting of a brown habit over which a white scapular was worn. The vestments were of prime importance as they signified the humility of the heart, chastity, and contempt for the world and worldly things. After blessing them, the bishop handed them back to the hermit who was kneeling before him. As the hermit donned his new garments, the bishop said, "The Lord put on thee the new man, which, after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."<sup>32</sup>

Two well-known and respected hermit orders in Roman Catholicism are (1) the Carthusians and (2) the Camaldolese. The Carthusians live as "hermits-in-community." Each Carthusian monk spends most of his life within his own private cottage (called a cell). The cells are joined by a common cloister. Thomas Merton describes this lifestyle and its private environment:

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<sup>31</sup> Virginia Davis, "The Rule of Saint Paul, the First Hermit," Studies in Church History: Monks, Hermits, and the Ascetic Tradition (Great Britain: T. J. Press, Ltd., 1985), 203-213.

<sup>32</sup> Davis, 208-209.

Each cell has its own enclosed garden, and the monk neither sees or hears what is going on next door. He lives, in fact, all by himself. His cottage is relatively spacious. On the ground floor he has a woodshed and a workshop where he exercises his craft, if he has one. There is also a sheltered porch in which he walks when the place is snowed under.... On the second floor he has...the Ave Maria...a kind of antechamber to the real cell where the monk spends most of his time. [The Ave Maria] is the place where the monk pauses in prayer on his way in and out of the cell.

The real cell is a bedroom and sitting room with two alcoves, one an oratory and the other a study. In the one the monk kneels in meditation or recites the day hours of the Canonical office.... In the other he has his desk [and] a shelf of books....<sup>33</sup>

In this little cottage, the Carthusian hermit "studies, and meditates, and rests, and takes his meals, and recites a good part of the daily office and other appointed prayers."<sup>34</sup>

The Carthusian hermits value silence and solitude more than any other order in Western Christianity. They spend nineteen or twenty hours a day in the seclusion of their cottages and gardens, "seeing no one, speaking to no one, alone with God."<sup>35</sup> The purpose of their solitude "is to place the soul in a state of silence and receptivity that will open its spiritual depths to the action of the Holy Spirit...."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 98-101.

<sup>34</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 101.

<sup>35</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 102.

<sup>36</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 106.

The principles which guide the Carthusian hermit's life are fourfold:

1. The principle of quiet--rest from the pursuit of temporal goods and ambitions.
2. The principle of solitude--separation from the presence of other people and the sight of worldly things.
3. The principle of silence--conversation without purpose.
4. The quest for supernatural realities--the search for and finding joy in spiritual things.<sup>37</sup>

The Camaldolese hermits observe the discipline of silence and solitude more rigorously than the Carthusians. The purpose of this order is to provide a place where individuals may practice the life of complete solitude, contemplation, and meditation. The Camaldolese hermit remains in his cell twenty-four hours a day. His constant silent worship and praise places him continually in the presence of the Lord.<sup>38</sup> One of the characteristics of the Camaldolese order that distinguishes it from other silent hermit orders is that the Camaldolese hermit may live as a recluse. "After five years of solemn profession, a hermit who is well qualified and tested may receive permission to live absolutely alone and undisturbed in his cell, never coming out to join the others in the church or in their common gatherings except three times a year...."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 106.

<sup>38</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 110-114.

<sup>39</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 115.

Monasticism as an organized movement virtually ceased to exist immediately following the Protestant Reformation. The anti-monastic movement began in Germany with Martin Luther in the 1520's.<sup>40</sup> Luther "opposed the imposition of monastic perfection upon the laity."<sup>41</sup> In England, the anti-monastic movement came about primarily as a result of the dispute between King Henry VIII and the Roman Catholic Church. The Statutes of Provisors in 1534 and 1539 declared that English kings, not the pope, controlled church appointments in England. In the 1530's, under the reign of Henry VIII, Parliament again limited the authority of the Catholic Church. This Reformation Parliament "dissolved English monasteries and redistributed [the monasteries'] land and endowments."<sup>42</sup> By the 1600's, organized monastic life almost had disappeared from "the British Isles...the Low Countries, Protestant Germany, and Scandinavia...." The Huguenots dealt a severe blow to the movement in France.<sup>43</sup> In the 1700's, two additional factors--the French Revolution and "enlightened despots"--further crippled the monastic movement.<sup>44</sup>

An ex-Franciscan monk, Eberlin, wrote four pamphlets which were highly critical of Catholic monasticism. The first pamphlet, "A Warning to All Christians to Have Mercy on Cloistered Women (Send Not

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<sup>40</sup> Christopher Brooke, The Monastic World (New York: Random House, 1974), 247.

<sup>41</sup> Steven E. Ozment, The Age of Reform: 1250-1550 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 265.

<sup>42</sup> Ozment, Age of Reform, 186-188.

<sup>43</sup> Brooke, 247.

<sup>44</sup> Brooke, 248.



Your Daughter into a Convent Until You Have Read This Little Book)," depicted monasteries as "presenting more obstacles to Christian life than the world...." The pamphlet accused monks of forcing nuns into involuntary servitude. The second pamphlet, "Concerning the Long and Grievous Cry That Religious Monks, Priests, and Nuns Call the Canonical Hours," "compared singing the canonical hours with farming, housekeeping, and other physical labors." Eberlin's last two pamphlets called for "the dissolution of monasteries as an act of charity for thousands who suffer under burdensome, un-Christian, and inhumane rules...."<sup>45</sup>

As the initial hostility of the Protestant Reformation toward monastic communities began to wane, the Protestant Church began to rediscover the value of organized monasticism. The Church adopted the following rules at Wolfaria to guide monastic communities.

- \*Monks were required to dress like other people when they were outside of the monasteries.
- \*No one under the age of thirty could take the monastic vows.
- \*No monk could live in one monastery for more than ten years.
- \*The education of children in Christian doctrine became the main purpose of monasteries.
- \*No more than two monasteries and two nunneries could locate in a city. All monasteries and nunneries over two in a city or area were to be converted into hospices for the poor and destitute.
- \*Monks wishing to leave the monastery were allowed to do so.

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<sup>45</sup> Steven E. Ozment, The Reformation in the Cities: The Appeal of Protestantism to Sixteenth-century Germany and Switzerland (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 93.

\*All endowments beyond those needed by the convent or monastery for support went into a common fund.<sup>46</sup>

Protestantism's rediscovery of monasticism came about primarily as a result of the Oxford Movement in England in the 1800's. The rediscovery occurred first among women monastic orders. In 1839, E. B. Pusey and J. H. Newman recognized the Sisters of Charity in the Anglican Church. On Trinity Sunday, 1841, Pusey "received the vows" of Mariam Rebecca Hughes. Hughes became "the first Superior of the Covenant of the Holy and Undivided Trinity at Oxford." In 1845, Pusey organized a convent at Park Village, Regent's Park, in England. Following the establishment of these orders, other Protestant women communities began to organize. The most famous include:

\*The Community of St. Mary the Virgin, founded in 1848 by W. J. Butler, vicar of Wantage.

\*The Community of St. John the Baptist, founded in 1852 by T. T. Carter.

\*The Community of All Saints, founded in 1851 by W. Upton Richards, vicar of All Saints.

\*The Community of St. Margaret, founded in 1855 by J. M. Neale.

These communities came to be known as "mixed" communities: they integrated the solitude of monastic life into the life of service "among...the poor in the slums of the great cities." The first completely solitary women's community after the Reformation, The Sisters of the Love of God, organized in 1907.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ozment, Reformation in the Cities, 99-100.

<sup>47</sup> F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., "Religious Orders in Anglicanism," The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 1171.

Men's monastic communities in the Protestant Church grew less rapidly than women's communities. In 1842, J. H. Newman organized an unofficial monastic community. In 1865, R. M. Benson established the Society of St. John the Evangelist at Cowley. This society constituted the first official men's monastic order in the Anglican Church. In 1891, H. H. Kelly established the Society of the Sacred Mission. In 1892, C. Gore founded the Community of the Resurrection. Nashdam Abbey served as the birthplace of the English Order of St. Benedict in the early 1900's. The post-World War I era witnessed the founding of an English Franciscan Order. Other Anglican monastic communities adhering to the pattern of monastic life set forth by the Catholic Cistercian Order and Charles de Foucauld developed in the 1900's.<sup>48</sup>

The Church of England has been historically the most active of all Protestant churches in establishing monastic orders. Other denominations, however, have founded their own religious orders. In 1675, the Lutheran Augustinians in Mollenbeck, Germany, established the first Protestant monastery. In 1836, the Lutheran Church organized a community of women in Germany. In 1940, the Lutheran and Reformed churches organized a monastic order at Taize, France.<sup>49</sup> The Taize monastic community functions as an ecumenical community.<sup>50</sup> The modern Protestant Church claims about one-hundred monastic communities throughout the world, with "several thousand" members.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cross and Livingstone, eds., 1171.

<sup>49</sup> "Religious Life," The World Book Encyclopedia, 1987 ed.

<sup>50</sup> Brooke, 248.

<sup>51</sup> "Religious Life," World Book.

Thomas Merton addresses the monastic lifestyle of the Christian hermit. He uses the term "vocation to solitude" to describe the hermit's call. Merton says that "if there is any such thing as a Christian hermit, then it must be a man who has a special function in the body of Christ...."<sup>52</sup>

To deliver oneself up completely to the silence of a wide landscape of woods and hills, or sea, or desert; to sit still while the sun comes up over the land and fills its silence with light; to pray and walk in the morning and labor and rest in the afternoon, and to sit still again in meditation in the evening.... This is a true and special vocation.<sup>53</sup>

Peter Frederick Anson quotes Merton on the special call of the Christian hermit: "The Christian hermit is one who is led into the desert by the Spirit, not by the flesh...."<sup>54</sup>

Many well-known church leaders practiced and advocated the discipline of silence and solitude. Martin Luther, in the Smalcald Articles, spoke of private confession as a means of grace.<sup>55</sup> John Wesley in the Wesleyan/Methodist tradition recognized the value of silence and solitude. As a young man, Wesley committed himself to an hour of prayer in the morning and an hour in the evening. He faithfully maintained this commitment throughout his life and ministry.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Merton, Monastic Journey, 151.

<sup>53</sup> Merton, Thoughts in Solitude, 101.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Frederick Anson, The Call of the Desert: The Solitary Life in the Christian Church (London: S. P. Ck., 1964), 220.

<sup>55</sup> John W. Doberstein, ed., Minister's Prayer Book (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 318.

<sup>56</sup> Donald E. Demaray, ed., Devotions and Prayers of John Wesley (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1957), 3.

Steven Harper writes about Wesley's practice of praying alone at the beginning and end of each day:

First of all, Wesley prayed privately. He believed that in private prayer one waited in quietness to receive the blessings of God. Accordingly, he began his day in prayer. Much has been made about Wesley's habit of rising early, normally at 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning.

Wesley also prayed privately at the end of the day. This experience gave him a sense<sup>57</sup> of closure and commitment in his spiritual life.

Henry S. Lunn notes that John Wesley did his best to train the Methodist people in the art of silent meditation.<sup>58</sup>

The Russian poustinikki are the last outstanding examples of the solitary life. These hermits' cottages dotted the forests of the Russian landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Some are reputed to be alive today. Drawn to the life of silence and solitude from diverse occupations, the poustinikki withdrew into the desert (the Russian word for desert is "poustinia"). They spent their lives in intercessory prayer and in praying the Jesus Prayer without ceasing.

The Russian poustinikki lived in solitude, but not isolation. The Russian word for solitude means "being with everybody." The poustinikki, therefore, lived not only a life of prayer, but of counsel and service. Their home was always open to their neighbor's needs. Their tradition required them to enter the public domain from

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<sup>57</sup> Steven Harper, Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 19-22.

<sup>58</sup> Henry S. Lunn, The Secret of the Saints (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1933), 23.

time to time and speak the word they had received from the Lord.<sup>59</sup>

Herbert Slade observes, "Detachment of some kind has always been part of the...spiritual tradition."<sup>60</sup> The Desert Fathers fled into the Eastern deserts to escape the evils of civilization and find God. Their spiritual descendents, the Russian poustinikki, withdrew into the great forests to offer their lives in prayer and counsel. The discipline of silence and solitude always has appealed, and continues to appeal, to those seeking a deeper relationship with God.

#### Recent Historical Reflection

The church for the first fifteen centuries exemplified a positive attitude toward the discipline of silence and solitude. In the sixteenth century, a negative attitude toward the discipline began to prevail. The church's negativism toward silence and solitude continued until recent times.<sup>61</sup> A renewed appreciation of the discipline began taking shape in 1924 when Pope Pius XI called the solitary life "the most holy form of life."<sup>62</sup> In 1965, Vatican II declared that "communities...entirely dedicated to contemplation are a glory to the church and a wellspring of heavenly graces." Vatican II affirmed, "The contemplative life should be preserved with the utmost care." The Vatican's Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institute issued a document reaffirming the importance of solitaries

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<sup>59</sup> Edwards, 56.

<sup>60</sup> Herbert Slade, Exploration into Contemplative Prayer (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 123.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Keating, "Contemplative Prayer in the Christian Tradition," America 138 (1978): 278-281.

<sup>62</sup> Merton, Silent Life, 99.

as a witness for Christ.<sup>63</sup> In 1971, Pope Paul VI appealed to the Cistercian monks to "help the western church rediscover the contemplative dimensions of [the] Christian life."<sup>64</sup> David Knight declares, "This is a day of 'new monasticism' in the United States."<sup>65</sup> Many modern practitioners of silence and solitude have assisted the church to arrive at its renewed understanding and appreciation of the discipline.

Charles de Foucauld (1858-1946) may be the father of modern solitaries. Foucauld lived his early years as a French nobleman. He lost his faith at a young age, after which he lived for a period in "license and debauchery." He received a dishonorable discharge from the French army. He studied geography and participated in a geographical expedition to Morocco. While in Morocco, Foucauld fell under the influence of Muslims and "began to hunger for spiritual truth." He returned to Paris where he became "reconciled to God through confession [and] the Eucharist." After reconciliation to God, Foucauld saw a vision of himself living "a life of silence, adoration, and simple work among the wretched of the earth."<sup>66</sup>

Charles de Foucauld entered a Trappist monastery following his spiritual awakening. He chose the monastery of Akbes in Syria, one

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<sup>63</sup> "Renewal for the Cloister," Time, 5 Sept. 1969: 66-67.

<sup>64</sup> Basil M. Pennington, "Centering Prayer," America 156 (1987): 169.

<sup>65</sup> David M. Knight, "Desert Spirituality: An Answer to Massah and Meribah," Studies in Formative Spirituality 1 (May 1980): 181.

<sup>66</sup> Klaus Bockmuhl, "Saint for a Day: Charles de Foucauld," Christianity Today 23 (5 Jan. 1979): 58.

of the poorest monasteries in the Trappist order. When his Superior ordered him to stand watch over the body of a dead Christian Arab, Foucauld witnessed poverty like never before. The poverty of the monastery was nothing compared to the poverty of the Arab's home. This spiritual crisis prompted Foucauld to leave the Trappist monastery to pursue a different kind of religious life. He lived for several years "the contemplative life along the streets, in a situation similar to that of any ordinary man." Foucauld also founded a brotherhood of poverty at Beni-Abbes in the Sahara Desert.<sup>67</sup> He died a violent death in the Sahara in 1946.<sup>68</sup> Charles de Foucauld stated, "If the contemplative life were possible only behind convent walls or in the silence of the desert we should...give a little convent to every mother...and a track of desert to every person working in the bustling city to earn his living."<sup>69</sup>

Thomas Merton is the best-known solitary of the twentieth century. Merton lived the life of a Cistercian (Trappist) monk until his death in 1968. He lived at the Abbey of Gethsemani in Bardstown, Kentucky, for twenty-seven years, where his fellow monks knew him as Father Louis. The solitary life fascinated Merton early in his monastic career.<sup>70</sup> Even though speaking is severely limited in Cistercian monasteries, Merton discovered the lifestyle to be extremely noisy.

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<sup>67</sup> Carlo Carretto, Letters from the Desert (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972), 71-72.

<sup>68</sup> Bockmuhl, 58.

<sup>69</sup> Carretto, 70.

<sup>70</sup> Paulsell, 221.



He sought permission to live as a recluse on the monastery grounds.<sup>71</sup>

James Finley alleges that "Merton's life was not a romantic adventure:"

His solitary life was a poor life, as all solitary lives must be. He woke before dawn with a mind "not totally reconciled to being out of bed." He ate, worked, walked in the woods and prayed. In the winter he was cold and in the summer he was hot.<sup>72</sup>

Thomas Merton described himself as "a sort of stereotype of the world-denying contemplative--the man who spurned New York, spat on Chicago, and tromped on Louisville, heading for the woods with Thoreau in one pocket, John of the Cross in the other, and holding the Bible open to the Apocalypse."<sup>73</sup> Merton claimed he had one supreme desire: "the desire for solitude--to disappear into God...to be lost in the secret of his face." He lived that desire through "daily...solitude, silence, and prayer."<sup>74</sup>

Carlo Carretto heard God's call to the solitary life at the age of forty-four. "Leave everything and come with me into the desert," the divine voice commanded. "It is not your acts and deeds I want; I want your prayer, your love." In 1954, at the Vespers of St. Charles, Carretto heeded the divine voice. He said "good-bye" to his friends and former manner of life and journeyed into the Sahara Desert, where he joined the Little Brothers of Jesus, the fraternity founded by

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<sup>71</sup> Reuben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, eds., A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 137.

<sup>72</sup> James Finley, Merton's Palace of Nowhere: A Search for God Through Awareness of the True Self (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1978), 113.

<sup>73</sup> Finley, 52.

<sup>74</sup> Finley, 10.

Charles de Foucauld.<sup>75</sup>

The Sahara Desert taught Carlo Carretto two important spiritual lessons: (1) the joy of solitude, and (2) reliance on God. Carretto describes his solitary desert experience:

The great joy of the Saharan novitiate is the solitude, and the joy of solitude--silence, true silence, which penetrates everywhere and invades one's whole being, speaking to the soul with wonderful new strength, unknown to men to whom this silence means nothing.<sup>76</sup>

In the serenity of the Sahara Desert, Carretto realized how burdened his former manner of life had been: "I had walked, run, spoken, organized, worked in the belief that I was supporting something; and in reality I had been holding up absolutely nothing." Carlo Carretto found freedom in the solitude of the desert; he discovered that the burden of life was not his to shoulder. "The weight of the world," he realized, "was all on Christ crucified."<sup>77</sup>

Other saints of recent history continue to reveal the importance of silence and solitude. Adroniam Judson, the missionary to Burma, writes, "Leisurely devote two or three hours every day not merely to devotional exercises but to the very act of secret prayer and communion with God." Judson prayed alone seven times each day. He arose shortly after midnight for prayer. He prayed again at dawn, at nine o'clock each morning, and every three hours thereafter through

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<sup>75</sup> Carretto, xvii-xviii.

<sup>76</sup> Carretto, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Carretto, 16.

nine o'clock in the evening.<sup>78</sup> At the Covenant of Atonement near Dachau, Germany, twelve Carmelite nuns pray almost continually for the souls of the prisoners killed at the Dachau death camp.<sup>79</sup> Matthew Kelly, a monk of Gethsemani, lives the life of a hermit in Papua, New Guinea. Kelly believes the modern world has become a spiritual wasteland, and thus stands in need of hermits and contemplatives. "If anything is needed in this hour, it is men who know their way around in the desert," he declares.<sup>80</sup>

Contemporary women, as well as men, embrace the solitary lifestyle. In 1939, thirty-four hundred women lived in contemplative communities. By 1949, the number rose to 3,600. In 1969, there were 206 communities of contemplative women in the United States, housing approximately 4,100 members.<sup>81</sup>

Three Roman Catholic women in America embrace the lifestyle of the ancient Russian poustinikki. One of these women lives in Appalachia. Her cottage, like her lifestyle, is simple. She lives a life of prayer and counsel. To support herself financially, she periodically leaves her cottage and works as a waitress. In Michigan, two nuns reside next door to a Catholic Church. They work part-time with the church's adult literacy program. They spend most of their time in their home praying alone or with those who come to them for

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<sup>78</sup> Donald E. Demaray, How Are You Praying? (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), 156.

<sup>79</sup> "Cloister," Time, 64-67.

<sup>80</sup> Paulsell, 224-225.

<sup>81</sup> John C. Haughey, "A Future for Contemplatives?", America 121 (1969): 261.

advice and intercessory prayer.<sup>82</sup>

These contemporary saints, and many others, keep the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude alive in an activist world that frequently fails to recognize the discipline's value. These persons understand the importance of and build their lives around the advice of Thomas a' Kempis:

Leave vain things to the vain.... Shut thy door  
upon thee and call to Jesus thy love: dwell with  
him in thy cell<sup>83</sup> for thou shalt not find elsewhere  
so great peace.

#### Silence and Solitude in Other Religions

Peter Frederick Anson observes that most religions document cases of men and women who have intentionally sought solitude. "The call of the desert...has a remarkable affinity no matter in what religious system it is found."<sup>84</sup> Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam--each recognizes the value of silence and solitude in the development of the spiritual life.

Gautama Buddha was born in India approximately five-hundred years before the birth of Jesus. When Buddha was twenty-nine years old, he left his family and friends to spend six years in almost total isolation. In this state of silence and solitude, beneath the bo-tree at Gaya in Magadha, Buddha eventually reached "a state of salvation."<sup>85</sup> Gautama Buddha's seven principles for moral conduct are:

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<sup>82</sup> Edwards, 57.

<sup>83</sup> Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 162.

<sup>84</sup> Anson, 1-2.

<sup>85</sup> Anson, 1.

1. Guard the gates of the senses.
2. Become overwhelmed by nothing.
3. Eat a moderate diet.
4. Keep Vigilant.
5. Cultivate the self in solitude.
6. Be mindful and headful.
7. Purge the heart.<sup>86</sup>

"Separation from the world in the solitary existence of the hermit or ascetic...has been almost from time memorial a characteristic feature" of the Buddhist faith.<sup>87</sup> Frank W. Gunsaulus writes, "The long centuries have swept by, and still...does the majestic character of Buddha abide calm, patient, deliberate, brooding over the whole life of the East, as when for six years he waited under the sacred tree of Gaya for the great illumination."<sup>88</sup>

In the Hindu religion, the reverent brahmin looks for deliverance from the body of flesh. To achieve such deliverance, the brahmin must go through the anchorite stage of life. During this anchorite stage, the brahmin lives in the forest alone. He eats "roots, herbs, and leaves." The brahmin depends on benevolence for his clothing.<sup>89</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi epitomized the solitude of the Hindu religion. The movement Gandhi led was of a nonviolent, political nature; but his

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<sup>86</sup> Sagar, 126.

<sup>87</sup> Sagar, 125.

<sup>88</sup> Frank W. Gunsaulus, Paths to the City of God (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), 206-207.

<sup>89</sup> Anson, 1.

motivation sprang from his deep Hindu faith. Gandhi's life was guided by what he called "a search for truth." He often returned from the public world of protest marches and organized resistance to his private world of the spinning wheel. There he would sit for hours, alone, spinning the wool from which his clothes were made. The solitude of the spinning wheel, not the public world of activism, formed the center of Gandhi's existence.<sup>90</sup>

The Islamic religion experiences its own special form of silence and solitude. Prayers, sacred dances, and penance create the core of the Mohammedan monk's life. The monk usually performs one or more of the four following rituals as penance for sin:

1. Sleep deprivation.
2. Fetters on the ankles to create immobility.
3. Fasting.
4. Solitude.<sup>91</sup>

Solitude in the Islamic religion involves a form of punishment. In Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, the discipline represents a means to a deeper spiritual life.

The Shaman tradition understands the importance of silence and solitude. "A Shaman is a religious leader who makes direct contact with the religious realm and then mediates these realities to the people." Shamanism exists in India, Africa, Australia, Greece, and among the American Indians. The tradition depends on the solitary initiation rites of the Shaman novitiate. The aspiring young Shaman

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<sup>90</sup> MacDonald, 177-178.

<sup>91</sup> Sagar, 127.

as he reaches adulthood and seeks the credentials of the Shaman, goes alone into the wilderness. In the silence and solitude of the desert, he discovers his own identity and grows in his understanding of the spiritual world.<sup>92</sup>

Morton Kelsey summarizes the importance of silence and solitude among many of the world's major religions:

The practice of being alone in stillness is certainly central in the Hindu religion. Yoga and also various forms of Buddhist meditation begin and end in silence. Throughout Zen the value of utter stillness is recognized; the goal of Satori is to reach this ultimate inner peace, and the novice begins by searching while sitting still in the lotus position. There is a strong tradition of Chinese religious thought that the way of coming into harmony with Tao, which is the ultimate principle of reality, is by inner quiet....<sup>93</sup>

The majority of major religious thought recognizes the importance of silence and solitude, either as a means of penance or of achieving the deeper spiritual life.

#### Conclusion

The biblical saints, such as Moses, Isaiah, and John the Baptist, laid the foundation for the practice of the discipline of silence and solitude in the Christian religion. The biblical observance of the discipline reached its zenith in the life and ministry of Jesus. Throughout Christian history, from the Desert Fathers of the fourth century to contemporary solitaries such as Thomas Merton, men and women seeking deeper devotion to God have withdrawn from the world

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<sup>92</sup> Morton Kelsey, The Other Side of Silence (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 94.

<sup>93</sup> Kelsey, 94.

for various periods of time. The adherents of other religions--  
Buddhists, Hindus, and Moslems--recognize the importance of silence  
and solitude in the development of the spiritual life. The men and  
women of the Summerville United Methodist Church, therefore, stand in  
a long line of rich religious tradition as they seek spiritual growth  
through the discipline of silence and solitude.



## CHAPTER 4

### THEORETICAL REFLECTION

Chapter four considers the theoretical reflection upon the discipline of silence and solitude. The chapter explores four significant areas: (1) the need for silence and solitude in this twentieth-century American culture; (2) the difficulties involved in the practice of silence and solitude; (3) the implementation of silence and solitude in the practitioner's life; and (4) the results of silence and solitude in the practitioner's life.

#### The Need for Silence and Solitude

The data from the small group project in the Summerville United Methodist Church indicate the need for silence and solitude in the participants' lives. The data, presented in chapter two, indicate the majority of the participants live in a chronic climate of noise. They live with the noise of televisions, stereos, and other entertainment media in their homes. They experience a similar noise level from radios and cassette decks in their automobiles. Most interact with people in some capacity for the majority of the day. And working (busyness) consumes much of their time.

In addition, the majority of the participants in the Summerville project indicate a dissatisfaction with the quality of their lifestyles. Some perceive their schedules to be out of control, dictated by people, circumstances, and obligations. They express the need to get away from these demanding factors, to slow the pace of their

hurried lives, and to put more structure into them.

One may conclude on the basis of the data that the small group participants in the Summerville United Methodist Church need more silence and solitude in their lives. Silence and solitude reduces the noise and busyness level in the individual's life. It provides the separation the individual often needs from people, circumstances, and schedules. The discipline of silence, when embraced intentionally, allows the individual to slow down and put some structure into a lifestyle that is over-scheduled and out of control.

The scope of this project is limited to the participants in the Summerville United Methodist Church; therefore, it can provide no data about the need for silence and solitude in the larger cultural setting. Numerous authorities, however, conclude that the twentieth-century American culture grows busier and noisier each year, and society stands desperately in need of the renewal the discipline of silence and solitude offers. Urban T. Holmes, in Spirituality for Ministry, observes that "many persons...live in a fairly constant state of noise."<sup>1</sup> Richard J. Foster concurs with Holmes' assessment. In Freedom of Simplicity, Foster writes, "Society is dominated by the inane notion that action is the only reality."<sup>2</sup> Evelyn Underhill contends:

We spent most of our lives conjugating three verbs:  
to Want, to Have, and to Do. Craving, clutching,  
and fussing on the material, political, social,

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<sup>1</sup> Urban T. Holmes, Spirituality for Ministry (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 63.

<sup>2</sup> Richard J. Foster, Freedom of Simplicity (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981), 89.

emotional, intellectual--even on the religious--plane, we are kept in perpetual unrest; forgetting that none of these verbs have any significance, except so far as they are transcended by and included in, the fundamental verb, to be.<sup>3</sup>

G. Ernest Thomas declares that civilization becomes noisier and busier with each succeeding year:

The roar of machinery engulfs the factory worker. When he leaves his work he is surrounded by the noise of traffic. At home he is greeted by the continuous sounds of radio and television. Even when he tries to sleep he is engulfed by noise.<sup>4</sup>

Jane Howard reports that urban noise has doubled since 1955. She contends that if the level of noise continues to increase at the same rate that it has increased over the last thirty years, the American populace will "all be deaf by 2,000 A. D."<sup>5</sup>

The constant noise and busyness of modern society takes a toll in terms of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Jane Howard notes that laboratory rats subjected to constant noise over extended periods of time react "by becoming infertile, turning homosexual, and eating their young."<sup>6</sup> The American Academy of Family Physicians reports that almost 70 percent of the office visits to member doctors are stress-related. The Academy notes that stress-related illnesses cost American corporations, businesses, and industries approximately fifty billion to seventy five billion

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<sup>3</sup> Evelyn Underhill, The Spiritual Life (Wilton: Morehouse-Barlow, 1937), 20.

<sup>4</sup> G. Ernest Thomas, Disciplines of the Spiritual Life (New York: Abingdon Press, 1963), 45.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Howard, "Quiet, Please!", Life, 3 Dec. 1971: 75.

<sup>6</sup> Howard, 75.

dollars each year. Time magazine concludes that the stressfulness of the modern lifestyle contributes significantly to numerous serious illnesses, including "coronary heart disease, cancer, liver ailments, accidental injuries, cirrhosis of the liver, and suicide."<sup>7</sup> Doctor Richard Podell acknowledges that stress is a major problem in half of the patients he examines.<sup>8</sup> U. S. News and World Report states that "feeling tired all the time is one of the five most common ailments that prompt American adults to see a doctor." The article cites the Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, which in 1988 defined a new fatigue-related disease, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (C. F. S.). The Center for Disease Control characterizes C. F. S. as a "debilitating illness that lasts six months or longer and is accompanied by other symptoms such as joint aches and muscle weakness."<sup>9</sup> Doctor Joel Elkes of the University of Louisville summarizes the cause of many of today's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health problems, "Our mode of life itself, the way we live, is emerging as today's principal cause of illness."<sup>10</sup>

Gordon MacDonald observes that many people in modern America are driven by their needs to succeed and accumulate. He labels these persons as "driven." MacDonald points out eight character traits of driven people:

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<sup>7</sup> Gordon MacDonald, Ordering Your Private World (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 29-30.

<sup>8</sup> Steven Findley, "New Hope for Tired People," U. S. News and World Report, 31 Oct. 1988: 71-73.

<sup>9</sup> Findley, 71-73.

<sup>10</sup> MacDonald, Private World, 29-30.

1. They are gratified only by accomplishment.
2. They are preoccupied with the symbols of success and accomplishment.
3. They are caught up in the uncontrolled pursuit of expansion.
4. They tend to have a limited regard for integrity.
5. They often possess limited or undeveloped people skills.
6. They frequently experience a high degree of anger.
7. They are abnormally busy.<sup>11</sup>

Gordon MacDonald concludes that drivenness produces two disastrous consequences: (1) it depletes the driven person's physical energy, and (2) it starves the individual's inner life of the attention it needs.<sup>12</sup> Thomas Merton recognizes the inverse ratio between the individual's inner life and health, and the noise and busyness level in the individual's life. Merton writes, "Frenzy destroys our inner capacity for peace."<sup>13</sup> In other words, the inner life and health of the individual starves in direct proportion to the degree to which the individual's noise and busyness level is fed.

The problem of noise and busyness, and the need for silence and solitude, is not new. Henry David Thoreau described the frantic lifestyle of his day when he wrote, "The mass of men lead lives of

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<sup>11</sup> MacDonald, Private World, 31-36.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon MacDonald, Restoring Your Spiritual Passion (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), 30.

<sup>13</sup> Reuben P. Job and Norman Shawchuck, eds., A Guide to Prayer for Ministers and Other Servants (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1983), 384.

quiet desperation." Thoreau made his observation near the beginning of Walden, in which he described his withdrawal into the silence and solitude of Walden Pond.<sup>14</sup> Thoreau lived alone in a hut at Walden Pond from July 4, 1845, until September 6, 1847. He sought solitude because he wanted to "live deliberately." He wanted "to confront only the essential facts of life," and to understand as much of life as possible so that, when he faced death, he would not discover that he had failed to live.<sup>15</sup> Through the discipline of silence and solitude, Henry David Thoreau found inner peace, self-discovery, and spiritual and physical renewal.

The discipline of silence and solitude offers the same hope for inner peace, discovery, renewal and rebirth to the modern seeker. Andrew Murray notes that the need for a private prayer closet was one of the first lessons Jesus taught his twelve apostles.<sup>16</sup> Soren Kierkegaard writes that the Christian "often feels the need for solitude...." Kierkegaard contends that solitude is as much a necessity for the Christian as is breathing and sleeping.<sup>17</sup> Jenelyn Wessler and David B. Wessler affirm that "silence...is the beginning

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<sup>14</sup> John S. Dunne, The Reasons of the Heart (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 93.

<sup>15</sup> Emile Cailliet, Alone at High Noon: Reflections on the Solitary Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 18.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Murray, With Christ in the School of Prayer (Westwood: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1953), 28.

<sup>17</sup> Morton T. Kelsey, The Other Side of Silence (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), 96.

of all understanding and power."<sup>18</sup> F. P. Harton believes that the silence of "mental prayer is the primary necessity to all those who desire seriously to live the Christian life."<sup>19</sup> John Warren Steen affirms the discipline's necessity for spiritual growth.<sup>20</sup> And Ardis Whitman considers silence and solitude "an inescapable part of maturing."<sup>21</sup>

One may draw the following conclusions on the basis of the evidence and testimony:

1. The twentieth-century American culture finds itself caught in the throes of ever-increasing levels of noise and busyness. While the problem is not distinct to this modern culture, it does appear to be reaching epidemic proportions in modern America.
2. The problem of noise and busyness takes a severe toll upon the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health of modern society.
3. This twentieth-century American culture needs the discipline of silence and solitude to counterbalance its fast-paced lifestyle and ever-increasing levels of noise. The culture needs the discipline to restore some degree of wellness to its overall health.

The cultural context demands silence and solitude. The discipline seems to be a necessity, not only for those seeking personal and

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<sup>18</sup> Jenelyn Wessler and Daniel B. Wessler, The Gifts of Silence (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), 86.

<sup>19</sup> F. P. Harton, The Elements of the Spiritual Life: A Study in Ascetical Theology (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1934), 231.

<sup>20</sup> John Warren Steen, "Lessons from the Kindergarten of Contemplation," Christianity Today 30 (7 Feb. 1986): 30-31.

<sup>21</sup> Ardis Whitman, "Secret Joys of Solitude," Reader's Digest 122 (Apr. 1983): 131.

spiritual growth, but for the survival of modern American society as a whole.

### The Difficulty of Silence and Solitude

The twentieth-century American culture stands in need of the discipline of silence and solitude. Nevertheless, the personal achievement of the discipline remains difficult. Richard J. Foster refers to the difficulty of achieving silence and solitude when he quotes William Penn's Fruits of Solitude: "[Solitude] is a school few care to learn in, tho' none instructs us better."<sup>22</sup> Numerous practitioners of the discipline suggest why the silent life is so difficult to attain. Thomas a' Kempis suggests that most people fail to recognize the value of the contemplative life: "For that is the reason why there are few contemplative men to be found, because few have the knowledge to withdraw themselves fully from things about to perish and from creatures."<sup>23</sup> Maurice Maeterlinck concurs with Thomas a' Kempis. G. Ernest Thomas cites Maeterlinck on silence: "Silence is the ever-available but seldom-possessed treasure of those who are wise enough and humble enough to receive it."<sup>24</sup>

Henri J. M. Nouwen contends that silence is difficult to achieve because people fear it:

One of our main problems is that in this chatty society, silence has become a very fearful thing. For most people, silence creates itchiness and

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<sup>22</sup> Richard J. Foster, Study Guide for Celebration of Discipline (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas a' Kempis, The Imitation of Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1958), 155.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, 45.



nervousness. Many experience silence, not as full and rich, but as empty and hollow. For them silence is like a gaping abyss which can swallow them up.<sup>25</sup>

Many people fear silence and solitude because the discipline exposes the false securities and superficial lifestyles on which they have built their existences. Dallas Willard notes this fearful aspect of silence: "Solitude is a terrible trial, for it serves to crack open and burst apart the shell of our superficial securities."<sup>26</sup> Stanislaw A. Zielinski, in Psychology and Silence, quotes Robert Barclay on the fear of silence and solitude. Barclay believes that "silence is against human nature." People are unaccustomed to it, he reasons, and therefore fear it. Barclay notes that many people's fear of mental silence overshadows their fear of being alone physically:

If we stop thinking and do not fall asleep, we are open to whatever may emerge from the unconscious. And many things are there which we simply cannot face, even when they appear in a disguised form.<sup>27</sup>

Bradley Hanson, in The Call of Silence, reiterates Barclay's theory. Hanson writes, "Most of us are so unaccustomed to [silence] that we feel ill-at-ease."<sup>28</sup>

Two additional problems confront the would-be practitioner of silence and solitude: (1) the conflict with the outer world, and (2)

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<sup>25</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Way of the Heart (New York: Ballantine Books, 1981), 43.

<sup>26</sup> Dallas Willard, The Spirit of the Disciplines (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 161.

<sup>27</sup> Stanislaw A. Zielinski, Psychology and Silence (Wallingford: Pendle House Publications, 1975), 29.

<sup>28</sup> Bradley Hanson, The Call of Silence (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1980), 52.

the discipline of the inner self. The first problem, conflict with the outer world, results from an activist culture that often fails to understand the value of the contemplative life.

A lot of the difficulty...is that we have grown up in a society that assumes that activity is virtuous and passivity is wicked. "Satan," the Victorians liked to say, "finds mischief for idle hands to do." We want to be good; we want to be the sort of person that society admires.... To this end we work ceaselessly....<sup>29</sup>

Stephen A. Kurtz alludes to society's non-understanding attitude toward the discipline when he declares, "But silence is shocking... because it breaks a basic social code:" the social code of activity and busyness.<sup>30</sup>

Morton T. Kelsey observes that getting started (or, as he declares, "finding an opening to silence") is the greatest difficulty Westerners face in the practice of silence and solitude.<sup>31</sup> G. Ernest Thomas phrases this problem in a different manner. He writes, "Solving the problem of adequate time is of first importance...."<sup>32</sup> The time problem appears to be one aspect of the larger problem of busyness: people fall so much under the influence of an activity-oriented culture, allowing themselves to become so busy, that they believe they have no time to slow down and enter into the silent, solitary life. Frequently, if they do slow the pace of their active

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<sup>29</sup> Monica Furlong, Contemplation Now (Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 1983), 17.

<sup>30</sup> Kurtz, 137.

<sup>31</sup> Kelsey, 116.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, 43.

lifestyles, their minds remain so cluttered that their thoughts cannot be stilled.

Monica Furlong, in Contemplation Now, contends that many persons, by-products of an action-oriented culture, actually organize their lives so that they will remain busy most of the time. She contends that various professional persons, such as physicians and clergy-persons, arrange their schedules so that their services are always in demand. She notes that some women organize their lives so that they are always busy, either with child-bearing or domestic work:

In some cases, they time child-bearing in such a way as to forbid themselves an escape from busyness. But more often they make themselves prisoners to domesticity and the family, setting themselves even higher standards of housekeeping, insisting on ever more unrealistic standards of duty and helpfulness to those around them.<sup>33</sup>

Furlong recognizes that activity has certain advantages: "It makes the trains run.... It keeps us clean, punctual, obedient. It gets things done."<sup>34</sup> But she simultaneously understands that over-emphasis on activity creates its own set of problems.

Demosthenes, the ancient Athenian statesman and orator, explained that the source of his eloquence was "Action! Action! Action!" The modern world offers the same response when asked to explain the source of meaningful living.<sup>35</sup> The would-be practitioner of silence and solitude must confront and overcome the obstacles placed in his path

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<sup>33</sup> Furlong, 16-17.

<sup>34</sup> Furlong, 17-18.

<sup>35</sup> Frank W. Gunsaulus, Paths to the City of God (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1906), 202.

by this action-oriented world if he is successfully to enter into the spiritual discipline.

The second major problem the solitary confronts in the practice of silence and solitude is the lack of personal discipline. Silence and solitude constitutes one of the spiritual disciplines of the Christian tradition. The nature of the word "discipline" implies something that must be worked at, something that must be imposed on the individual, something not natural to or inherent within the individual. Gordon MacDonald refers to this disciplinary aspect of silence and solitude:

Silence is not native to my world. Silence, more than likely, is a stranger to your world, too. If you and I ever have silence in our noisy hearts, we are going to have to grow it.<sup>36</sup>

Silence and solitude seldom occurs accidentally. It grows within the individual as that individual disciplines his or her life to make room for silence and solitude.

Thomas Merton contends that the first step toward the discipline of silence and solitude is separation from the world. "You will never find interior solitude," he declares, "unless you make some conscious effort to deliver yourself from the desires, cares, and interests of an existence in time and the world."<sup>37</sup> The solitary and would-be solitary must also struggle to free himself or herself from the constraints the self imposes: laziness, lethargy, bad habits, and practices that make one's life easy and comfortable. "The tighter we

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<sup>36</sup> MacDonald, Private World, 128.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Merton, Seeds of Contemplation (Norfolk: New Direction Books, 1949), 60.

are bound by selfish habits," Hugh L'Anson Fausset declares, "the harder it is to move into a life of silence and solitude."<sup>38</sup> Richard J. Foster identifies seven elements in the practice of meditative silence and solitude over which the practitioner must achieve discipline:

1. The wandering mind.
2. The tendency to fall asleep.
3. The place of meditation.
4. The length of meditation.
5. The time for meditation.
6. The posture of meditation.
7. The spiritual influences that are not of God.<sup>39</sup>

The reversal of willful habits and the denial of comfortable influences upon the self requires what Thomas Merton calls an "inner upheaval." He defines this upheaval as "a breaking out of the routine, a liberation of the heart from the cares...of daily business."<sup>40</sup>

Hugh L'Anson Fausset observes that many persons fail to achieve the discipline needed to enter into the solitary life. Their "mental habits" are so fixed that they cannot endure upheaval.<sup>41</sup> Thomas

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<sup>38</sup> Hugh L'Anson Fausset, Fruits of Silence (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1963), 118-119.

<sup>39</sup> Richard J. Foster, Meditative Prayer (London: Stanley L. Hunt, Ltd., 1983), 26-30.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, Inc., 1958), 48.

<sup>41</sup> Fausset, 133.

Merton also recognizes that few persons achieve the discipline of silence and solitude:

There are few who are willing to belong completely to such silence, to let it soak into their bones, to breathe nothing but silence, to feed on silence, and to turn the very substance of their life into a living and vigilant silence.<sup>42</sup>

The solitary faces many obstacles, not the least of which are the fear of silence, the lack of understanding from an activity-oriented world, and the absence of personal discipline within the would-be solitary. These and other obstacles often appear so insurmountable that the successful pursuit of the solitary life requires, in the words of one who successfully lived the solitary existence, "the conversion of the whole self to God."<sup>43</sup>

#### The Implementation of Silence and Solitude

Jessamyn West writes, "It is not easy to be solitary unless you are born ruthless."<sup>44</sup> West's observation reflects the difficulty many experience when moving into the life of silence and solitude. One may need ruthlessly to bring the bodily passions and appetites under the control of self-discipline. Or one may need ruthlessly to disregard the antagonism of an activity-oriented culture that often misunderstands the solitary existence. Richard J. Foster explains the solitary's disciplined disregard of the world:

To enter solitude, we must disregard what others think of us. Who will understand this call to aloneness? Even our closest friends will see it

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<sup>42</sup> Merton, Thoughts in Solitude, 101.

<sup>43</sup> Merton, Thoughts in Solitude, 49.

<sup>44</sup> Willard, 161.

as a terrible waste of precious time and as rather selfish and self-centered.<sup>45</sup>

In spite of the numerous difficulties, however, the achievement of silence and solitude in the modern world remains possible.

In his lecture, "The Psychological Meaning of Silence," Theodore Reik observes that most people become interested in silence initially through curiosity, or "benevolent interest."<sup>46</sup> Gradually, their mild curiosity grows, and they take their first faltering steps toward the discipline. They continue to journey farther and farther down the path as they become increasingly cognizant of the benefits the discipline produces in their lives.

Ron Del Bene and Herb Montgomery contend that one may journey into the solitary life only when one feels the need for silence. Bene and Montgomery call the experiencing of this need "the hunger of the heart." They liken it to a spiritual awakening through which the individual realizes there is more to life than what he or she has been experiencing (work, recreation, the quest for power and wealth, drugs, sex, and other trappings the modern, secular world deems important). Bene and Montgomery contend that this spiritual hunger resembles an unsatisfied physical hunger in which the individual satisfies the empty stomach with candies and pastries, only later to realize these items cannot satisfy and that the body needs more substantial food. In like manner, Bene and Montgomery contend, the delicacies the modern, secular world offers cannot satisfy the

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<sup>45</sup> Foster, Study Guide, 44.

<sup>46</sup> Kurtz, 139.

spiritual hunger of the heart.<sup>47</sup>

This "hunger of the heart" crystallizes into one basic question: "Do I really want and feel the need for quiet time with God?".<sup>48</sup> When the individual explores his or her spiritual hunger on the cognitive level, answering this question affirmatively, he or she is ready to undertake the journey into silence and solitude.

Some would-be practitioners of the discipline make a serious mistake as they move into silence and solitude: "[They] think that they can...squeeze the divine action into their busy...schedule." But, according to Yves Raguin, "God will not allow himself to be taken in this way."<sup>49</sup> To enter successfully into the life of silence, either fully or partially, the seeker must concentrate on two simultaneous processes: the seeker must withdraw from the outside world to the degree to which he or she is seeking silence and solitude, and he or she must create a sense of focus from within.<sup>50</sup> Morton T. Kelsey describes this twofold process: "To become really silent, one has to come to a halt outwardly and inwardly at the same time."<sup>51</sup>

The individual who senses the need for more silence and solitude may create this space in several ways. The individual may shut out

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<sup>47</sup> Ron Del Bene and Herb Montgomery, The Hunger of the Heart: A Call to Spiritual Growth (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1983), 11-15.

<sup>48</sup> Steven Harper, Prayer Ministry in the Local Church (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 40.

<sup>49</sup> Yves Raguin, Paths to Contemplation (St. Meinrad: Abbey Press, 1974), 115.

<sup>50</sup> Herbert Slade, Exploration into Contemplative Prayer (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 123.

<sup>51</sup> Kelsey, 95.



the noise over which he or she has control: turning off the television, stereo, or other entertainment media in the home; or turning off the radio or cassette deck in the car while traveling. If the individual has control over the amount of time he or she spends with other people (either at work or in a non-occupational setting), he or she might consider spending less of this time in personal interaction and conversation. The individual might evaluate his or her workload and, where possible, prune away any unnecessary busyness; this, too, would allow more time for silence and solitude. Periodic personal retreats also provide time to be alone and quiet. William M. Moremen encourages the use of personal retreats:

What is not always realized is the possibility of a solitary retreat of one's own from time to time. Go to a mountain cabin alone. Get a room for a few days in a nearby monastery. In some locations organizations and communities provide... a retreat space and an atmosphere conducive to the deepening of awareness....<sup>52</sup>

Physical activities such as walking and jogging provide time alone.

A. G. Gish notes the benefit of activities associated with the simple lifestyle: gardening, walking, making one's own clothes.<sup>53</sup> Francois Fenelon considers the importance of "chance moments" in the development of silence and solitude:

You must learn...to make good use of chance moments, when waiting for someone, when going from place to place.... The less time one

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<sup>52</sup> William M. Moremen, Developing Spiritually and Professionally Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), 28-29.

<sup>53</sup> D. Gill, review of Beyond the Rat Race, by A. G. Gish, Christianity Today 18 (26 July 1974): 32.

has, the more carefully it should be managed.<sup>54</sup>

Martin E. Marty calls attention to a significant opportunity to experience silence and solitude: the opportunity the commuter has while traveling to and from work. Marty observes that much of urbanized, twentieth-century America spends considerable amounts of time traveling to and from the workplace, often stalled in rush hour traffic. He labels this phenomenon "cocooning," and declares it a "form of antisocial life." Marty notes he has experienced cocooning for the past twenty-five years while traveling to and from his work at the University of Chicago. In the process, he has discovered one of the phenomenon's major benefits: cocooning provides time to be alone.

We are living out the form of antisocial life known as cocooning. Urbanites who fear AIDS [and] crime in the streets...are...spending increasingly more time holed-up in comfortable little places: this is cocooning.

My fellow confessionalists in cocoons concur: we like this because it is the one time of the day when we are alone. One can do Zen. Engage in reverie. Repent. Resolve. Memorize sonnets.... Be away from the telephone.... Run through a prayer list that keeps growing. Ponder "tender mercies." Envision plots of never-to-be-written novels. Watch the sun come up over Lake Michigan.<sup>55</sup>

Henri J. M. Nouwen refers to the brief moments the individual carves out for silence and solitude as "empty time."<sup>56</sup> Gordon MacDonald calls them "safe places." He asks:

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<sup>54</sup> MacDonald, Spiritual Passion, 170.

<sup>55</sup> Martin E. Marty, "Me and My Cocoon," The Christian Century 104 (1978): 1071.

<sup>56</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, "Unceasing Prayer," America 139 (1978): 51.

Can a bus seat become a safe place? An automobile stopped in a rush hour traffic jam? An office between appointments? A sickroom where a mother waits over a suffering child? A sidewalk during a stroll? A lunchcounter before a class?<sup>57</sup>

These "empty times" and "safe places" provide oases of silence and solitude many busy people would otherwise miss. Through providing the opportunity for silence and solitude, they simultaneously provide the space required for silent prayer, meditation, and deepening one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Physical activities also provide brief moments in which the individual can withdraw for refreshment of the soul and body. Bradley Hanson testifies that walking proves to be an excellent meditation technique for him and his wife. Hanson relates the account of an editor who prays the Jesus Prayer while jogging.<sup>58</sup> Richard J. Foster notes that "swimming and jogging are singularly appropriate for the interior work [of meditative prayer]." Foster acknowledges that he meditates while riding the bus.<sup>59</sup> William M. Moremen established the relationship between "running, swimming, walking, [and] cycling" and the breath prayer:

As we inhale, we silently address God with a short phrase, and as we exhale we silently breathe a phrase of thanksgiving, petition, or intercession. The whole time of exercise becomes a kind of prayer, with our bodies providing the sanctuary, the rhythm, and the occasion of our prayer.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> MacDonald, Spiritual Passion, 135.

<sup>58</sup> Hanson, 89-90.

<sup>59</sup> Foster, Meditative Prayer, 28-29.

<sup>60</sup> Moremen, 97.

Practitioners of silent prayer agree that a quiet time and a quiet place constitute the two foremost basic elements of the discipline. Ronald Klug contends, "The very first thing we need to do is set apart a time and a place to be with God...."<sup>61</sup> Fay Conlee Oliver lists the same two items as necessities: "a quiet place, a half-hour of undisturbed time, and the willingness to begin seriously are the only basic requirements."<sup>62</sup>

The time and place of silence varies. Dallas Willard recommends getting up in the middle of the night for prayer.<sup>63</sup> Fay Conlee Oliver suggests getting up a half-hour earlier in the morning. She understands the discipline getting up earlier involves, but notes that "since meditation results in extra energy, the thirty minutes of missed sleep will probably not be noticed...."<sup>64</sup> Thomas Kelly advocates silent prayer at the end of the day: "Let inward prayer be your last act before you fall asleep."<sup>65</sup> Each pilgrim of silence and solitude must find the most suitable time. Richard J. Foster emphasizes the importance of finding an appropriate time for the practice of silence and solitude:

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<sup>61</sup> Ronald Klug, How to Keep a Spiritual Journal (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Publishers, 1982), 16.

<sup>62</sup> Fay Conlee Oliver, Christian Growth Through Meditation (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976), 69.

<sup>63</sup> Willard, 163-164.

<sup>64</sup> Oliver, 69.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas R. Kelly, A Testament of Devotion (New York: Harper and Row, 1941), 39.

Some draw near in the recreating silences of the early morning, others quiet themselves best in the deep quiet of the night, still others retreat from the blast of the day for a time of attentive, listening silence. We must have a time to still the churning, to quiet the restlessness, to meditate on the almighty God who dwells in our hearts.<sup>66</sup>

The place of silent prayer is as important as the time of prayer. For some, the place of prayer may be a room in the home or at the office. For others, it may be outside: a lake, a country lane, the shade beneath a spreading oak, a park bench. Maxie Dunnam testifies that he finds his study more conducive to prayer than any other place. He writes of a businessman who sets aside a special chair in the corner of his office for the purpose of keeping "his rendezvous with God."<sup>67</sup> Steven Harper acknowledges that he considers his office his private sanctuary:

A third thing I have to do is to have my quiet time the very first thing after I get to my office. I am not the kind of person who can roll out of bed and make immediate contact with God. My chemistry takes a little longer to get going.... Devotions must be the first thing I do when I get to the study.<sup>68</sup>

Harper also notes the significance of the commuter train and automobile as a prayer sanctuary, the phenomenon Martin E. Marty referred to as cocooning. Harper concludes that, in an "increasingly urbanized society" such as twentieth-century America, praying (like many other things) must be done "on the run." He declares that praying while

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<sup>66</sup> Foster, Freedom of Simplicity, 90.

<sup>67</sup> Maxie Dunnam, The Workbook of Living Prayer (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1974), 112.

<sup>68</sup> Harper, Prayer Ministry, 40.

traveling to and from the workplace is a viable method of communing with the Lord.<sup>69</sup> Thomas Merton summarizes the importance of the place of prayer. He, too, suggests the practitioner seek a private place.

[There] you should be able to untether yourself from the world and set yourself free, loosing all the strands of tension that bind you, by sight, by sound, by thought, to the presence of other men.

Once you have found such a place, be content with it. And do not be disturbed if a good reason takes you out of it.<sup>70</sup> Love it, and return to it as soon as you can.

Many of the saints and spiritual leaders of the Church developed methods for entering into the silence of prayer and meditation.

Ignatius developed five meditation techniques, each focusing on a different aspect of Scripture or theological principle. In the first method, the practitioner focuses on the Ten Commandments. In the second method, the practitioner gives attention to the Lord's Prayer. The third method involves the recitation of prayers. The fourth method centers on the state of souls under condemnation and praises God for deliverance from such fate. The fifth method considers numerous theological questions.<sup>71</sup> Saint Teresa encouraged her listeners to picture Jesus standing next to them. She writes, "We should ever meditate on the greatness and majesty of our God."<sup>72</sup> St. John of the Cross encouraged meditation in three stages:

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<sup>69</sup> Harper, Prayer Ministry, 77.

<sup>70</sup> Merton, Seeds of Contemplation, 60.

<sup>71</sup> Henry S. Lunn, The Secret of the Saints (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, Ltd., 1933), 95-96.

<sup>72</sup> Lunn, 99.

1. Imaginative reflection of the mystery on which one wishes to meditate.
2. Intellectual consideration of the mystery.
3. Loving and attentive repose in God.<sup>73</sup>

The Sulpician method of meditation concentrated on Jesus: "Jesus before the eyes (adoration), Jesus in the heart (communion), and Jesus in the hands (cooperation)."<sup>74</sup>

John Wesley believed silence could be attained through reading.

He gave the following instruction on meditative reading:

1. Assign some time daily for formative reading.
2. Prepare the heart and mind for reading by "purity of intention."
3. Do not read "curiously or hastily, but seriously and with great attention."
4. Make sure your temperament corresponds to what you read.
5. Conclude the period of reading with prayer.<sup>75</sup>

Maxie Dunnam refers to meditative reading as "being quiet before the Word." He suggests the individual come before God with a "passively open" heart and mind. In this "passively open" state, the individual concentrates on the Scripture, and makes whatever personal application may be appropriate.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Carlo Carretto, Letters from the Desert (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1972), 45.

<sup>74</sup> Harton, 249-250.

<sup>75</sup> Lunn, 24-25.

<sup>76</sup> Dunnam, Living Prayer, 117.

Steve Harper offers six practical steps to a meaningful quiet time:

1. Open yourself to God.
2. Find the time most suitable to your schedule.
3. Dedicate that period of time to the Lord.
4. Select devotional material that speaks to your needs.
5. Keep the quiet time "simple and brief."
6. Apply the insights learned<sup>77</sup> during the quiet time to your active life.

L. N. Bell adds that the individual may also need several practical items, such as a comfortable chair, a good light, pencil and paper, and a concordance.<sup>78</sup>

The would-be solitary often finds entrance into the discipline of silence and solitude difficult. The busyness of Western culture mitigates against any systematic practice of silence and solitude. In spite of the cultural milieu, however, one may gain control over the busy, noisy forces that constantly clamor for attention. Some reduce the noise level in their immediate environments, such as in their homes and automobiles. Others re-evaluate their day-to-day contacts with other people. Growing numbers of people temporarily put aside their daily routines for brief periods of physical exercise. Still others recognize the hunger in their souls for spiritual growth, and seek times and places for prayer and meditation. The techniques for the

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<sup>77</sup> Harper, Prayer Ministry, 41-42.

<sup>78</sup> L. N. Bell, "That Priceless Hour," Christianity Today 14 (13 May 1970): 31-32.



implementation of silence and solitude vary with the individual. Those techniques serve as instruments through which the individual enters into the stillness of the soul and, in doing so, finds inner peace and a deeper relationship with the Lord.

#### The Benefits of Silence and Solitude

Alvin P. Sanoff contends that the modern world has "lost sight" of the benefits of the discipline of silence and solitude. Sanoff, a psychiatrist, holds his profession responsible for the demise of the discipline. He notes that the field of psychiatry holds up "personal relationships [as] the only source of fulfillment." He cites as evidence the criteria by which child development is evaluated: the child's adjustment to peer and parental relationships. Sanoff notes, as further evidence, that adult relationships are analyzed in terms of heterosexual relationships.<sup>79</sup> This writer believes that Sanoff's contention considers only part of the data. While much of contemporary culture fails to recognize the value of silence and solitude and defines meaningfulness in terms of relationships, productivity, and materialism, a growing number of persons are rediscovering the many benefits the discipline offers.

William Sullivan, a Roman Catholic spiritual father of the early 1900's, praises the training he received in the discipline of silence and solitude during seminary:

There is no species of training I ever underwent to which I owe more than to the habit of regular periods of inner solitude. Solitary we must be in life's great hours of moral decision; solitary in

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<sup>79</sup> Alvin P. Sanoff, "The Creative Virtues of Loneliness," U. S. News and World Report, 12 Sept. 1988: 62.

pain and sorrow; solitary in old age and going forth to death. Fortunate the person who has learned what to do in solitude, and brought himself<sup>80</sup> to see what companionship he may discover in it.

Sullivan recognizes the many benefits silence and solitude hold out to the spiritual pilgrim, the seeker of God. He calls the experience of being alone and quiet "the richest joy I knew."<sup>81</sup> Other persons, many of whom speak from the secular perspective, laud the virtues of silence and solitude. Carl Jung writes, "The highest and most decisive experience is to be alone."<sup>82</sup> Henry David Thoreau notes in his journal from Walden, "I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude."<sup>83</sup>

The discipline of silence and solitude offers many rewards to those who summon the courage to enter into its holy of holies. Through silence and solitude, one enters into the presence of God. John Dunne states that within each human being there exists a "deep loneliness," a yearning for closeness and intimacy. This yearning often seeks other human beings as the source of its fulfillment. But, according to Dunne, personal relationships and superficial encounters never can completely satisfy the human need for intimacy. These relationships never can satisfy because, Dunne theorizes, humanity's

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<sup>80</sup> Maxie Dunnam, The Workbook on Spiritual Disciplines (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1984), 132.

<sup>81</sup> Dunnam, Spiritual Disciplines, 132.

<sup>82</sup> John S. Dunne, The Reasons of the Heart (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 55.

<sup>83</sup> Carol R. Murphy, Nurturing Contemplation (Wallingford: Pendle Hill Publications, 1983), 13.

deep loneliness is really a yearning for relationship with God; and, therefore, never can be gratified until the individual enters into communion with God.<sup>84</sup> Silence and solitude opens the door to more intimate fellowship with God, and thus fulfills the yearning of the human heart.

Throughout biblical and church history, the saints and spiritual fathers have testified that silence allows one to enter into deeper communion with God. Maxie Dunnam quotes Francois Fenelon:

We must retire from all outward objects, and silence all desires and wandering imaginations of the mind; that in this profound silence of the whole soul, we may hearken to the ineffable voice of the Divine Teacher. We must listen with an attentive ear; for it is a still, small voice.<sup>85</sup>

J. Patrick Dobel, in "Liturgical Silence," writes, "Peace and silence are times for renewing our acquaintance with God...."<sup>86</sup> Ronald V. Wells declares, "You can only reach God in stillness...."<sup>87</sup> In How Are You Praying?, Donald E. Demaray notes two advantages of silence: (1) silence removes the difficulties some people experience when they pray aloud, and (2) silence helps one hear the voice of God.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Dunne, 58.

<sup>85</sup> Dunnam, Spiritual Disciplines, 118.

<sup>86</sup> J. Patrick Dobel, "Liturgical Silence," Commonweal 106 (1979): 434.

<sup>87</sup> Ronald V. Wells, Spiritual Disciplines for Everyday Living (Nashville: The Upper Room, 1982), 65.

<sup>88</sup> Donald E. Demaray, How Are You Praying? (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1985), 72.

In Exploration into Contemplative Prayer, Herbert Slade speaks of a phenomenon he calls "sense withdrawal," in which the individual withdraws from the outer world and from inner feelings. Slade contends that sense withdrawal creates, not a vacuum as some might believe, but an opportunity to concentrate on God.<sup>89</sup> Yves Raguin says simply, "Anyone who wants to get close to God must set aside a short time each day to speak to him alone, a time of intimacy and encounter."<sup>90</sup>

Brother Lawrence, The Carmelite laybrother who lived during the 1600's, constitutes the supreme example of how silence may deepen one's relationship with the Lord. Brother Lawrence served his fellow monks as a cook in their monastery near Paris. He carried out his daily labors in a state of "continual awareness of the presence of God." Brother Lawrence explained his secret for remaining in the presence of the Divine even when occupied with the business of the day: "I keep myself in His presence by simple attentiveness...or to put it more clearly, an habitual silence and secret conversation of the soul with God."<sup>91</sup>

G. Ernest Thomas explains why silence and solitude must be a pre-requisite for entering fully into the presence of the Lord:

Silence is one characteristic of the Almighty.  
And until we develop the discipline of silence<sup>92</sup>  
we shall never have firsthand knowledge of him.

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<sup>89</sup> Slade, 124.

<sup>90</sup> Raguin, 25.

<sup>91</sup> Charles Cummings, "Formation Towards Prayer Without Distractions," Studies in Formative Spirituality 8 (Nov. 1987): 313.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas, 45.

The discipline of silence and solitude leads the individual into a more fulfilling relationship with God. The discipline also leads one into a deeper life of social action. Some believe the pietistic discipline of silence and solitude stands in direct contrast to social action; one is either a pietist or an activist. In the words of John C. Haughey, one moves in one of two directions: :Martha-wards or Mary-wards."<sup>93</sup> In reality, however, the disciplines of pietism and activism complement one another. Maxie Dunnam writes in his Workbook on Spiritual Disciplines:

...One of the fruits of solitude is a sharpened sensitivity to and a solidarity with persons. In solitude and silence there comes a new freedom to be with people. We gain a capacity for a new attentiveness to the needs of others, a new responsiveness to their hearts.<sup>94</sup>

Dunnam echoes the theme a second time in Alive in Christ: The Dynamic Process of Spiritual Formation: "Solitude and solidarity are so inseparably linked that the contemplative life is not a life separated from the world; it is a life intimately involved in the world."<sup>95</sup>

Dunnam cites the experience of Thomas Merton: "It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brother. The more solitary I am, the more affection I have for them."<sup>96</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen wonders rhetorically if the desert experience blinds one's eyes

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<sup>93</sup> John C. Haughey, "A Future for Contemplatives?," America 121 (1969): 263.

<sup>94</sup> Dunnam, Spiritual Disciplines, 122.

<sup>95</sup> Maxie Dunnam, Alive in Christ: The Dynamic Process of Spiritual Formation (Nashville: Abingdom Press, 1982), 122.

<sup>96</sup> Dunnam, Spiritual Disciplines, 123.

to the harsh realities of the modern world. He answers his own question with a resounding "No!" "On the contrary," Nouwen declares, "solitude, silence, and prayer allows us to save ourselves and others from the shipwreck of our destructive society."<sup>97</sup> Nouwen declares that "compassion is the fruit of solitude and the basis of all ministry."<sup>98</sup> He, additionally, takes silence and solitude one step beyond ministry. He asserts that solitude that fails to lead to compassion and social involvement is not solitude at all, but "pious emotion:"

But if the catastrophic events of our days, the wars, mass murders, unbridled violence, crowded prisons, torture chambers, the hunger and illness of millions of people and the unnamable misery of a major part of the human race is safely kept outside the solitude of our hearts, our contrition remains no more than a pious emotion.<sup>99</sup>

Nouwen tells of a friend who ceased reading a major newspaper because of the newspaper's daily focus on "war, crime, power games, and political manipulation." Nouwen comments that the cancelation of the newspaper is a sad commentary on modern spirituality. Nouwen contends that the authentic spiritual life does not seek to withdraw from the world, but becomes more attuned to the needs of the world and offers viable solutions.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Nouwen, Heart, 76.

<sup>98</sup> Nouwen, Heart, 20.

<sup>99</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life (Garden City: Image Books, 1975), 54.

<sup>100</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 50-51.

Church history abounds with individuals who, from the foundation of the inner life, moved into the outer world of social activism. The struggle for racial equality led by Martin Luther King during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's sprang from "the wholeness of a person recollected in silence and the presence of God." Dag Hammarskjol in Markings recounts how his regular quiet times enabled him to "endure the constant turmoil of political conflict."<sup>101</sup> John Woolman, the early Quaker, sensed the connection between the inner and outer life. As his inner life became richer through "holy obedience," his outer life grew more sensitive to the misery of humankind.<sup>102</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen writes about the relationship between piety and works in the life of Thomas Merton:

The paradox of Merton's life indeed is that his withdrawal from the world brought him into closer contact with it. The more he was able to convert his restless loneliness into a solitude of the heart, the more he could discover the pains of his world...and respond to them.<sup>103</sup>

Merton's "social criticism" grew directly out of his hidden life in God--"the fruit of a vision of God arrived at through prayer and contemplation and monastic ascesis."<sup>104</sup>

James C. Fenhagen summarizes the relationship between social activism and the discipline of silence and solitude:

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<sup>101</sup> Kelsey, 96-100.

<sup>102</sup> Job and Shawchuck, eds., 314-315.

<sup>103</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 59.

<sup>104</sup> Patrick Hart, review of Thomas Merton: Contemplative Critic by Henri J. M. Nouwen, America 128 (1973): 224.

Christian ministry is more than doing good. [It] is an act of service performed...in the name of Christ. Ministry is Jesus Christ expressing his life through us. It is born, therefore, not in activity, but in solitude, where through the Spirit we experience the power of life from within.<sup>105</sup>

A third benefit of silence and solitude is that it enables the individual to enter more fully into community. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in Life Together, explores the relationship between solitude and community. Bonhoeffer contends that the two are related in a complementary manner--solitude enhances community, and community makes solitude necessary. "Only in fellowship do we learn to be rightly alone and only in aloneness do we learn to live rightly in the fellowship." According to Bonhoeffer, one who fears solitude cannot fully experience community because the fear of being alone creates an unhealthy need for other people. The individual who fears aloneness "plunges into a void of words and feelings." On the other hand, the individual who disdains the community in favor of complete solitude "perishes in an abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair."<sup>106</sup> Through participation in community life, the individual enters more fully into solitude; and through participation in solitude, the individual enters more fully into community. The discipline of silence and solitude enhances community.

Nicholas Berdyaev writes that four types of relationships exist between human beings and their community (or "social environment"):

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<sup>105</sup> Job and Shawchuck, eds., 252.

<sup>106</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together: A Discussion of Christian Fellowship (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1954), 77-78.



1. There is the person who is fully engaged in the social environment. This individual has no knowledge of silence and solitude, and feels completely comfortable with community life.
2. There is the person who has no knowledge of silence and solitude, but nevertheless feels unconcerned about society. This individual shares none of the concerns of the surrounding community.
3. There is the person who has an awareness of the solitary existence; but, despite a lack of social concern, refuses to cultivate silence and solitude.
4. There is the individual who has an awareness of both silence and solitude and the community. This person cultivates his or her inner world through silence, but also expresses concern for the community.<sup>107</sup>

The fourth type of relationship in Berdyaev's scheme achieves the balance between solitude and community of which Bonhoeffer writes. In that relationship, community enhances solitude, and solitude enables the individual to experience community.

Henri J. M. Nouwen explains how the discipline of silence and solitude enhances community life:

Without the solitude of heart, the intimacy of friendship, marriage and community life cannot be creative. Without the solitude of heart, our relationships with others easily become needy and greedy, sticky and clinging, dependent and sentimental, exploitative and parasitic, because without the solitude of the heart we cannot experience others as different from ourselves but only as people who can be used for the fulfillment of our own, often hidden, needs.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Nicholas Berdyaev, Solitude and Society (London: Geoffrey Bless, Ltd., 1947), 75-76.

<sup>108</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 43-44.

Solitude acquaints the individual with himself or herself. And only when one comes to know oneself can one then relate to others, "not greedy for attention and affection, but offering...to help build a community of love." The discipline of silence and solitude does not remove one from people; it brings one closer to people, thus "making real fellowship possible."<sup>109</sup> Joan Mills, in "Sweet Uses of Solitude," summarizes the symbiotic relationship between silence and solitude and community: "It is separateness that sweetens togetherness--or it is the other way around?"<sup>110</sup>

The discipline of silence and solitude offers intellectual, as well as spiritual and social, benefits. Beth Brophy, in U. S. News and World Report, cites a study of 150,000 "only" children (those with no brothers nor sisters). These "only" children were compared to those who have one or more siblings. The study revealed that "onlys are better educated, score higher on IQ tests, and develop better social skills" than children with brothers and sisters. Brophy notes that children with no siblings do not fit into groups as readily as children with siblings; but once they do become part of the group, "they tend to dominate" the group.<sup>111</sup>

The discipline of silence and solitude stimulates creativity as well as intellect. Maxie Dunnam quotes Ralph Harper in The Sleeping Beauty:

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<sup>109</sup> Nouwen, Reaching Out, 42.

<sup>110</sup> Joan Mills, "Sweet Uses of Solitude," Reader's Digest 96 (June 1970): 214.

<sup>111</sup> Beth Brophy, "It Doesn't Hurt to be Alone," U. S. News and World Report, 6 Mar. 1989: 54.

We know that serious things have to be done in silence. In silence men love, pray, listen, compose, paint, write, think, and suffer.<sup>112</sup>

Dunnam contends that the enhancement of creativity constitutes one of solitude's primary purposes. He calls attention to the fact that "many artists, writers, and musicians" have testified to the role silence and solitude plays in their creativity.<sup>113</sup> Alvin P. Sanoff notes the relationship between silence and solitude and the creative and intellectual aspect of humanity: "...The imagination flourishes best in solitude."<sup>114</sup>

Naomi Barton, the literary agent who worked closely with Thomas Merton on many of his books, expressed profound dismay when she learned Merton had entered a Cistercian monastery. Barton feared Merton's seclusion would hinder his creativity and thus spell disaster for his literary endeavors. To the contrary, Merton's monastic life enabled him to write with a depth and charm he may never have known in the public world.<sup>115</sup> The monastic life of Thomas Merton testifies to the creativity-enhancing quality of silence and solitude.

The discipline of silence and solitude, in the form of meditation, offers a multitude of physical and psychological benefits. These benefits include the reduction of hypertension, the slowing of the pulse rate, and the lowering of the body temperature in times of

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<sup>112</sup> Dunnam, Spiritual Disciplines, 124-125.

<sup>113</sup> Dunnam, Spiritual Disciplines, 125.

<sup>114</sup> Sanoff, 62.

<sup>115</sup> Murphy, 5.

intense pressure.<sup>116</sup> In addition, the discipline has a positive effect on diseases such as "bronchial asthma, tension headaches, [and] insomnia."<sup>117</sup> "The release of tension and the reduction of anxiety" constitute the discipline's most significant psychological value.<sup>118</sup>

Bradley Hanson notes two additional psychological benefits:

1. Meditative silence and solitude enhances the individual's self-acceptance. People who have been unduly severe with themselves have relaxed their expectations after entering into meditation.
2. The discipline produces a heightened sense of individuality. Through meditation, the person becomes more aware<sub>119</sub> of the self as distinct from other people.<sup>119</sup>

Hanson cites Patricia Carrington in Freedom in Meditation: "...Meditation can aid people in realizing their full human potential by helping the self to grow without hinderances."<sup>120</sup>

The benefits of silence and solitude appear different for various people. Ardis Whitman contends that the discipline increases the capacity for memorization and assists in overcoming anxieties and fears.<sup>121</sup> Melody Beattie speaks of inner rewards: "serenity; a deep sense of peace; the ability to give and receive love in a self-enhancing

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<sup>116</sup> Charles M. Olsen, "The Closet, the House, and the Sanctuary," The Christian Century 98 (1981): 1286.

<sup>117</sup> Hanson, 92-93.

<sup>118</sup> Hanson, 91.

<sup>119</sup> Hanson, 91.

<sup>120</sup> Hanson, 86.

<sup>121</sup> Whitman, 129-130.

and energizing way...."<sup>122</sup> Richard J. Foster notes that silence releases people from the necessity to control other people.<sup>123</sup>

Henri J. M. Nouwen speaks of silence and solitude as "the place of purification and transformation," where the individual is freed from obsession with the temporal and secular.<sup>124</sup> Jane Howard believes that "prolonged silence can produce...euphoria."<sup>125</sup>

Morton T. Kelsey summarizes the myriad of benefits the discipline of silence and solitude offers: "Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together, that at length they may emerge, full-formed and majestic, into the daylight of Life, which they are thenceforth to rule...."<sup>126</sup> A culture that measures meaningfulness and success in terms of relationships, productivity, and materialism is rediscovering the truth which Kelsey states. That culture is gradually coming to understand that "silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together"--and it is returning to its spiritual roots through the discipline of silence and solitude.

### The Conclusion

The quest for wealth and success, the constant need to achieve, the defining of meaningfulness in terms of personal relationships, the relentless drive to produce, the never-ending flurry of activity--

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<sup>122</sup> Melody Beattie, Codependent No More (New York: Harper-Hazeldon, 1987), 57.

<sup>123</sup> Foster, Freedom of Simplicity, 57-58.

<sup>124</sup> Nouwen, Heart, 18.

<sup>125</sup> Howard, 75.

<sup>126</sup> Kelsey, 96.

these and other factors point to the shallowness of much of twentieth-century American culture. Such factors call attention to the need to slow the pace of life, redefine values, and return to basic spiritual roots. The discipline of silence and solitude offers the opportunity to pursue life on this deeper level.

Many persons experience difficulties when seeking to incorporate the discipline of silence and solitude into their previously shallow existences. The culture that creates the need for the discipline simultaneously mitigates against its implementation. In spite of the cultural milieu, however, anyone may successfully enter into the world of silence and solitude. Various forms of Christian meditation, physical exercise, retreats, the re-evaluating of one's daily activities and relationships offer avenues for withdrawal from the outer world. Those who overcome the obstacles to silence and solitude, and successfully incorporate the discipline into their lives, find a depth of living and richness unknown to the outer world of people, noise, and things.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter summarizes the key elements of the project-- the small group experience utilizing the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude in the Summerville United Methodist Church, Phenix City, Alabama. The chapter reiterates the factors in the church which made the project necessary. The chapter re-states the hypothesis, summarizes the pre-test data and correlates it with the post-test data, and evaluates the impact of the project on the congregation. The chapter concludes by examining the long-term consequences of the project and assessing the recommendations of the Congregational Reflection Group for future ministry.

#### Summary of Important Elements

In June, 1986, when this writer assumed pastoral leadership of the Summerville United Methodist Church, the church appeared in a state of spiritual and physical decline. Two factions in the congregation were struggling for power. The membership showed no signs of spiritual vitality. And the members had allowed the physical plant to deteriorate. The Summerville Church found itself locked in a struggle for survival. The writer assessed the state of spiritual and physical decline of the church, and determined four significant factors contributing to this state of crisis.

1. The environment of political corruption in which the Summerville Church had been born and nurtured.

2. The affluence of the church members.
3. The continual state of noise and busyness in which the church members lived.
4. The problem of isolation from the church which several of the church's elderly members experienced.

The writer determined that these four factors combined over the years to create one major problem in the church: acedia, or spiritual lethargy. Urban T. Holmes, in Spirituality for Ministry, defines acedia as "spiritual boredom, an indifference to matters of religion, or simple laziness."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the members of the Summerville Church sought to address the lethargic state of the church through the implementation of institutional programs (revival services, visitation programs, stewardship emphases, etc.). These programs failed to revitalize the church because the lack of personal spirituality precluded many members from participating in the programs. This writer--the church's pastor--determined that the church needed some kind of personal spiritual renewal emphasis. He reasoned that the Summerville Church, or a small core within the church, must experience spiritual renewal as a prerequisite to the success of other church programs and the renewing of the corporate life. The writer implemented a small group project utilizing the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude. He anticipated that a study of this ancient spiritual discipline would have a fourfold effect on the Summerville Church:

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<sup>1</sup> Urban T. Holmes, Spirituality for Ministry (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982), 42.



1. The discipline would introduce the members to a source of spiritual power more potent than the political power they were accustomed to using.
2. The discipline would sharpen the members' capacity for spiritual discernment, enabling them to see the futility of their quest for affluence.
3. The discipline would enable the members to withdraw from the noise and busyness of their daily lives.
4. The discipline would teach the elderly members of the church how to transform their loneliness and isolation into meaningful solitude.

The writer anticipated that the addressing of these factors would also address the acedic condition of the church to which these factors contributed.

The problem and proposed solution generated the following thesis statement: this study will develop, implement, and evaluate a twelve-week series of sermons and small group experiences in the Summerville United Methodist Church utilizing the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude with the purpose of heightening the participants' understanding and practice of this means of grace and revitalizing the spiritual life and program of the church. The thesis statement served as the foundation of the project.

The project took place over a twelve-week period from January through April, 1989. Sixteen members of the Summerville United Methodist Church participated. Twelve of the sixteen participants stayed with the project to its finish. The participants completed the pre-test questionnaire at the beginning of the project. During the subsequent twelve Sunday morning worship services, they responded to a sermon on the theme of silence and solitude. They met in a small

group format each Tuesday night to consider the theme of the previous Sunday and participate in the exercise of silence and solitude. The participants completed the post-test questionnaire at the conclusion of the project.

#### Correlation of Data

The post-test questionnaire asked the same questions as the pre-test questionnaire. The questions fell into four categories: (1) those relating to daily activities; (2) those concerning devotional practices; (3) those relating to specific personal habits; and (4) those having to do with the respondents' satisfaction-levels with their lifestyles. The post-test questionnaire asked four additional questions not included on the pre-test questionnaire:

1. Do you have a greater awareness of the subject of silence and solitude now than before participating in this project?
2. Do you feel an increased need for silence and solitude in your life now than before participating in this project?
3. Are you more willing to incorporate silence and solitude into your life now than before participating in this project?
4. Do you believe that you actually experience more silence and solitude in your life now than before participating in this project?

The four additional questions utilized the closed-ended method for data-gathering. The respondents chose between a pre-figured set of answers: "yes" or "no."<sup>2</sup> The post-test questionnaire sought to determine the impact of the project on the participants by

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<sup>2</sup> Thelma Gould, "Dissertation Writing and Field Research," Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, 12 Jan. 1989.

ascertaining the participants' growth in the practice of silence and solitude during the project.

### Daily Activities

The pre-test data indicated that the respondents considered family relationships, prayer, Bible-reading, and the reading of inspirational books other than the Bible the most important activities of their day. Other activities, however, consumed the majority of their time. Work and housework, personal hygiene practices, and breakfast constituted the most common elements in the respondents' morning routines. Seven of the sixteen respondents indicated that a quiet time was a part of their morning routine.

The post-test data indicated little change from the pre-test data. The majority of the respondents still considered family relationships, prayer, Bible-reading, and the reading of inspirational books the most important activities of their day. Twelve persons considered prayer an important activity. Four persons considered as important reading the Bible and inspirational books. Seven persons stated that family-related activities ranked highly on their list of priorities. Five persons rated work as significant.

Work constituted the most time-consuming activity in the respondents' lives. The respondents answered "work" or "housework" eighteen times when asked to list the activity which required the majority of their time. Three respondents stated that television took up significant amounts of their time. One person indicated Bible study to be time-consuming. No one listed the other disciplines of silence and solitude, such as prayer, meditation, and reflection, as consuming much of their time.

The elements common to the majority of the respondents' morning routines were: work or housework, personal hygiene practices, breakfast, and reading the newspaper. Eight persons indicated that prayer and Bible study were part of their morning routines.

The overwhelming majority of the respondents indicated they spent most of their day with people. Nine respondents stated they spent from 80 percent to all of their day with people. One person indicated he or she spent 60 percent of the day in contact with others. Only two respondents indicated they spent less than 50 percent of their day with people. Eight respondents indicated they enjoyed the constant, daily contact with people.

#### Devotional Practices

The pre-test data indicated that the majority of the respondents practiced a quiet time on a daily basis or when they could work it into their schedules. The following activities constituted their quiet times: prayer, Bible-reading, reading religious books other than the Bible, thinking and reflecting, enjoying nature, and writing in a journal. The majority of the respondents indicated they had no special time nor place for the practice of their spiritual disciplines. Those who had a specific time stated that the morning hours were the most conducive to their quiet times. Those who had a specific place stated that a comfortable chair or a certain room in the house was the most conducive to their quiet times.

The post-test data showed little change from the pre-test data. The majority of the respondents declared they practiced a quiet time. Eight persons said they practiced a quiet time on a regular basis; two indicated they had a quiet time when they could work it into their

schedules. The respondents indicated the following rituals comprised their quiet times:

Prayer	- 11 responses
Bible-reading	- 10 responses
Inspirational reading	- 11 responses
Thinking/Reflecting	- 8 responses
Enjoying nature	- 5 responses
Keeping a journal	- 1 response

Ten respondents indicated they prayed several times per day, while two indicated they prayed once per day. Two persons said they prayed when they felt the need. Nine respondents indicated they seldom or never kept a journal. Two persons indicated they wrote in a journal when they needed to express their thoughts and feelings. One person stated he or she wrote on a daily basis. Eleven respondents indicated they read the Bible once per day or several times per week. Ten gave a similar response when asked how frequently they read religious books other than the Bible. Ten indicated they meditated at least once per day or several times per week. Only one respondent indicated he or she seldom meditated.

When asked "Do you have a special time for your devotional activities?", approximately one-half of the respondents answered affirmatively. Eight indicated they had a special time to pray. Five indicated they had a special time to read the Bible and meditate. Four indicated they had a special time to read inspirational books. The individual who indicated he or she kept a daily journal also indicated he or she maintained a special time of the day to engage in that activity. Morning appeared to be the most popular time for the exercise of these spiritual disciplines. Five respondents indicated they prayed, read the Bible, and engaged in other quiet time activities

in the early morning. Four stated they practiced these disciplines in the evening. One person declared mid-afternoon to be the best time.

When asked "Do you have a special place for your devotional activities?", approximately one-half of the respondents replied affirmatively. Six had a special place to pray. Five had a special place to read the Bible. Four had a special place to meditate and read religious books other than the Bible. The respondents' favorite places for the practice of these spiritual disciplines were:

a favorite room	- 6 responses
a comfortable chair	- 3 responses
the woods	- 1 response
the patio	- 1 response
the breakfast table	- 1 response

#### Personal Habits

The pre-test data indicated that the majority of the respondents experienced a significant level of noise over prolonged periods of time. The pre-test data also indicated the majority of the respondents seldom experienced significant amounts of time alone.

The post-test data indicated minimal change. A majority of the respondents declared they turned off the television/VCR/sound systems in their homes most of the time. Most still listened to the car radio or cassette when traveling. Most also indicated they sometimes took walks by themselves, and sat alone and daydreamed or read. The majority never took trips/vacations/retreats by themselves.

#### Quality of lifestyle

The pre-test data indicated the respondents experienced some dissatisfaction with their busy lifestyles. The majority of the respondents indicated they did not have enough time to themselves.

They felt people, circumstances, and schedules made too many demands on their time. They expressed the desire to slow the pace of their lives and get away from the daily pressures. About one-half of the respondents indicated they stayed busy and did not have much spare time. Only one respondent felt overworked and extremely busy.

The post-test data indicated minimal change. A majority of the respondents continued to feel the pressure of a busy lifestyle. Nine respondents indicated they sometimes needed to get away from the pressure of their daily schedules. Eight indicated they sometimes did not have enough time to themselves and that there were periodically too many demands on their time. Eight expressed the need to slow the pace of their lives. Ten sometimes felt that their lives were out of control.

In rating their daily lives, the respondents were equally divided. Six indicated they stayed busy and did not have much spare time. Five indicated they experienced a good balance between work and leisure. Only one respondent felt overworked and busy.

#### Conclusions from the Data

Four of the original sixteen participants in the project dropped out of the small group before the conclusion of the project. Those four individuals did not fill out the post-research questionnaire. The writer, therefore, cannot draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the project based on a comparison of specific numerical responses. The writer can draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the project based on a comparison of percentages of numerical responses.

### Conclusions about the Small Group

The post-test data indicate minimal amounts of change from the pre-test data in the four surveyed areas. The project produced no substantial statistical changes in the amounts of silence and solitude the participants experience in their daily lives. The participants continue to lead busy lives with minimal amounts of silence and solitude. The silence and solitude they enjoy usually comes in the form of early morning or late night devotional practices. The participants, however, do not turn on the televisions and other entertainment media in their homes as frequently as they did before the project.

The additional questions on the post-test indicate that the respondents experienced some spiritual growth because of their participation in the project. All twelve of the respondents who completed the post-test indicate they have a greater awareness of the discipline of silence and solitude after participating in the project. Nine of the twelve respondents feel an increased need for silence and solitude after participating in the project. Ten of the twelve acknowledge more willingness to incorporate silence and solitude into their daily routines. And eight of the twelve believe they actually experience more silence and solitude following the completion of the project (although the data does not substantiate their beliefs).

The correlation of the pre-test data and post-test data and the evaluation of the additional post-test data indicate that the project partially supported the hypothesis. The participants grew in their understanding of the discipline of silence and solitude. Their growth in the actual practice of the discipline remains inconclusive because



of the discrepancy between the statistical data and the subjective perceptions of the participants.

### The Hawthorne Effect

All conclusions based on a correlation of the pre-test data and post-test data must consider the impact of the Hawthorne Effect. Researchers first noticed this phenomenon during research projects conducted at the Hawthorne Plant of the Western Electric Company. Productivity increased among workers in spite of the intentional reduction of ideal working conditions. Researchers concluded that the special attention they gave the workers during the project proved enough incentive to increase productivity.<sup>3</sup>

The influence of the Hawthorne Effect on the small group participants in the Summerville Methodist Church appears possible. The participants sensed the pastor's enthusiasm for the project and understood his anticipation that the project would revitalize the spiritual life of the church. Consequently, the participants may have performed well during the small group project, but failed to sustain a comparable level of silence and solitude following the completion of the project.

### Impact on the Church

The writer's original expectation in implementing this project was that a small group experience utilizing the discipline of silence and solitude would deepen the participants' spiritual lives, and thus create a positive impact on the acedic condition of the Summerville

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<sup>3</sup> Forbis Lee Kivett, "The Renewal Effect upon the Congregation by Small Groups Using an Adaptation of John Wesley's Band Model," (D. Min. diss., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1988), p. 74.

Church. The writer thus expected the heightened spiritual vitality of the small group participants to make a positive impact on the spiritual lives of the non-participants. Spiritual growth frequently defies statistical analysis; therefore, the writer chose to evaluate the project's impact on the spiritual growth and program of the Summerville Church through observation.

The writer's observations lead him to conclude that the participants' heightened understanding of silence and solitude enhanced the spiritual growth and program of the church. The Summerville Church as a whole appears to be growing following the conclusion of the project. There appears to be a deeper emphasis on personal and corporate spiritual growth. The church experienced a successful revival in September, 1989. Approximately one hundred persons attended the revival services each night and responded enthusiastically to the evangelistic preaching and congregational singing. Numerous members have expressed their need to grow in the area of prayer following the completion of the project. The United Methodist women organized a prayer chain. The older adult Sunday School class also organized a prayer chain. The congregation participated in a prayer vigil as a means of praying for the revival services. And the Council on Ministries is planning a midweek prayer group utilizing The Workbook of Living Prayer by Maxie Dunnam.

The worship services in the Summerville Church appear more inspirational following the small group project with silence and solitude. The response of the congregation on Sunday morning appears enthusiastic. In May, 1989, one month after the completion of the project, the church purchased new United Methodist Hymnals and a new

baby grand piano. In October, 1989, a donor stepped forward to purchase new organ speakers. The addition of these items enabled the church to give music and congregational singing a more prominent place in the worship services.

The renewed interest in upgrading and maintaining the physical plant since the completion of the project also reflects a deeper spiritual life in the church. From May, 1989, through November, 1989, the Trustees installed ceiling fans in the kitchen and children's Sunday School rooms, undertook renovations of the parsonage, and voted to re-roof the church building. The United Methodist Women approached their annual Fall Bazaar and Bake Sale with renewed enthusiasm. They designated the Bazaar profits for the purchase of new carpet in the sanctuary, narthex, and Sunday School wing. The renovations of the church buildings and the purchase of the piano, hymnals, and organ speakers constituted major expenditures; however, the November, 1989, financial statement continues to show a balance of several thousand dollars in the general and designated accounts.

The members of the Summerville Church appear to have experienced a renewed interest in mission and evangelistic outreach since the completion of the project. The Work Area on Mission led the church in adopting and financially supporting two missionary families. Several members concerned with the evangelistic program of the church have begun contacting visitors and prospective members. One family has joined the church on profession of faith.

Other areas in the church show signs of renewed spiritual life. The youth and children program on Sunday evening has grown from two or three in attendance to approximately twenty. The Council on

Ministries is providing leadership for numerous activities, including fifth Sunday night fellowship programs. The Council also is planning special Christmas, Holy Week, and Easter programs. The members appear more willing to invest themselves in the program and ministry of the church than they were in previous years. One participant in the small group took the initiative to plan the homecoming musical program in October, 1989. Another participant volunteered to work with the youth and children program on Sunday evening. Several of the elderly members of the church worked with the church's annual barbecue in November, 1989. Others willingly accepted committee assignments in the church which they had not accepted or reluctantly accepted in previous years.

The growth in the church since the completion of the project indicates that the project addressed the factors which contributed to the acedic condition of the church.

- \*The cooperation of the factions in various programs indicates the triumph of spiritual power over the political power the factions previously utilized.
- \*The capital expenditures indicate that the church members are more willing than before to use their affluence to help the church.
- \*The heightened understanding of silence and solitude and the small gains the group participants made in the practice of the discipline indicate they realize there is an alternative to the busy, noisy lifestyle.
- \*The renewed involvement of some of the elderly in the church program indicates a renewal in their spiritual lives. (The project failed to help the isolated elderly transform their loneliness into meaningful solitude; it helped to create a climate in which some of the elderly moved out of their isolation into the life of the church).

Acedia, or spiritual lethargy, does not appear to be as severe as it

did when this writer assumed the pastoral leadership of the Summerville Church in June, 1986. The small group project utilizing the discipline of silence and solitude contributed to the spiritual revitalization of the church.

#### Long-term Consequences and Recommendations

The Congregational Reflection Group (C. R. G.) met a week after the completion of the project. In its evaluation of the project, the C. R. G. considered the long-term benefits of the project on the Summerville Methodist Church. The C. R. G. concluded that the project provided the small group participants with the tools necessary for spiritual growth. The C. R. G. also concluded that the project led the church into a spiritual depth it previously had not attained. The members of the C. R. G. believed the project showed the church members the relationship between silence, solitude, prayer, and communion with God. The understanding of this relationship, the C. R. G. affirmed, will create a more serious approach to corporate worship and a more caring and loving attitude among the church members.

The Congregational Reflection Group, in its evaluation meeting, recommended that the Summerville Church continue to emphasize spiritual life ministries. The C. R. G. recognized that personal and corporate spiritual growth lays the foundation for all church program and ministry.

The Council on Ministries and Work Area on Evangelism received the recommendation of the Congregational Reflection Group. Two programs mentioned previously grew out of the C. R. G.'s recommendation: the revival and the proposed midweek prayer group. The prayer group will begin in January, 1990. The Council on

Ministries plans to continue the emphasis on spiritual growth in 1990 and 1991. In addition, the Council plans to emphasize evangelism in 1990. The Council adopted the reception of twenty-two members in 1990 as its goal; this number reflects a twofold increase in the number of persons who joined the Summerville Church in 1989.

The benefit of the project may reach beyond the Summerville Methodist Church. The writer submitted the manual on silence and solitude which he designed and used in the small group to The Upper Room Publishing House. The former editor of The Upper Room, Maxie Dunnam, reviewed the manuscript and wrote a letter of endorsement to The Upper Room on behalf of the manuscript. The assistant editor of The Upper Room advised the writer that the manual has been sent to the reading committee for further review and consideration of publication. The assistant editor offered no guarantee of publication; however, should it be published, the manual would offer to other churches the same insights into the discipline of silence and solitude that it offered to the Summerville Church.

#### The Conclusion

The writer cannot envision the full impact the project will make on the Summerville Methodist Church or other churches. That impact may or may not prove substantial over the long-term. The project did, however, make a significant impact on the present spiritual life of the Summerville Church. The project checked the acedic condition of the church and introduced the church members to the possibility of personal and corporate spiritual growth. This writer hopes the Summerville Church will continue to grow spiritually so that it may come to the full knowledge and statue of its head, Jesus Christ.

APPENDIX A:

Research Questionnaire: Pre-test and Post-test

GROWING SPIRITUALLY: ENCOUNTERING GOD  
THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

A Small Group Experience with Silence and Solitude  
Summerville United Methodist Church  
Winter-Spring, 1989

I. Biographical Information

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Sex \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_
5. Education \_\_\_\_\_
6. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_
7. Hobbies \_\_\_\_\_
8. Number of children \_\_\_\_\_
9. Number of children living at home \_\_\_\_\_

II. Church Background

10. Are you currently a member of a church? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, what is the name of the church? \_\_\_\_\_
11. How many years have you been a member of this church? \_\_\_\_\_
12. What is the total number of years you have been a church member? (include membership in previous churches) \_\_\_\_\_
13. Check the church activities in which you participate:  

_____ Worship	_____ United Methodist Men
_____ Sunday School	_____ United Methodist Women
_____ Music Program	_____ Youth Group
_____ Sports Activities	_____ Committee Assignments
_____ Other Activities:	_____

14. How often do you attend Sunday School?

- Weekly  
 Three times a month  
 Two times a month  
 One time a month  
 Whenever you feel like it  
 Never

15. How often do you attend worship?

- Weekly  
 Three times a month  
 Two times a month  
 One time a month  
 Whenever you feel like it  
 Never

III. Personal Information Related to Spiritual Growth Through Silence and Solitude

16. List the activities which you consider the most important in your daily routine. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

17. List the activities which consume the most time in your daily routine. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

18. Describe your morning routine. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

19. What percentage of the day are you with people?

- |                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10% | <input type="checkbox"/> 60%     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20% | <input type="checkbox"/> 70%     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30% | <input type="checkbox"/> 80%     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40% | <input type="checkbox"/> 90%     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 50% | <input type="checkbox"/> All day |

20. Do you enjoy being with people a large percentage of the day?

- Yes  
 No



21. Do you have a daily quiet time (a time each day when you sit quietly and converse with the Lord)?  
 Yes  
 No
22. If you do not have a daily quiet time, do you have a quiet time when you can get around to it?  
 Yes  
 No
23. What rituals/activities comprise your quiet time?  
 Prayer  
 Bible-reading  
 Reading religious/inspirational literature and books  
 Writing in a journal/diary  
 Thinking/reflecting  
 Enjoying nature  
 Others: List \_\_\_\_\_
24. How frequently do you pray?  
 Several times per day  
 Once per day  
 Several times per week  
 When you feel the need  
 Never
25. How frequently do you write in a diary or journal?  
 Everyday  
 Weekly  
 When you feel the need to express your thoughts or feelings  
 Seldom  
 Never
26. How frequently do you read the Bible?  
 More than once per day  
 Once a day  
 Several times a week  
 When you can find the time  
 When you feel the need  
 Seldom  
 Never
27. How frequently do you read religious and inspirational books?  
 Daily  
 Several times a week  
 When there is nothing else to do  
 Seldom  
 Never

28. How frequently do you meditate?  
 More than once a day  
 Once a day  
 Several times a day  
 Seldom  
 Never
29. Do you have a special place for your devotional activities?  
 Prayer? Yes No  
 Writing in a journal? Yes No  
 Reading the Bible? Yes No  
 Reading inspirational/religious literature? Yes No  
 Meditation? Yes No
30. If you answered yes to any part of question 29, where is your special place? \_\_\_\_\_
31. Do you have a certain time of the day for your devotional activities?  
 Prayer? Yes No  
 Writing in a journal? Yes No  
 Reading the Bible? Yes No  
 Reading inspirational/religious literature? Yes No  
 Meditation? Yes No
32. If you answered yes to any part of question 31, when is your specific time? \_\_\_\_\_
33. Is the television/radio/VCR/sound system turn on in your home more often than not?  
 Yes  
 No
34. When you are traveling, is the radio/cassette turned on in your car more often than not?  
 Yes  
 No
35. Do you ever take walks by yourself?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
36. Do you ever sit alone and daydream?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
37. Do you ever sit alone and read a book or novel?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never

38. Do you ever take trips/vacations/retreats by yourself?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
39. Do you ever feel the need to get away from the pressures of your daily schedule?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
40. Do you ever feel like you do not have enough time to yourself?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
41. Do you ever feel that your life is out of control?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
42. Do you feel like people/circumstances/schedules are constantly making demands on your time?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
43. Do you feel the need to slow the pace of your life?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
44. Do you feel the need to put more order/structure into your life?  
 Frequently  
 Sometimes  
 Never
45. How would you rate your life on a day-by-day basis?  
 Extremely busy/overworked  
 Busy/not much spare time  
 Relaxed/good balance between work and leisure  
 Not busy enough/boring

#### IV. Additional Questions for the Post-test

46. Do you have a greater awareness of the subject of silence and solitude now than before participating in this project?  
 Yes  
 No

47. Do you feel an increased need for silence and solitude in your life now than before participating in this project?  
 Yes  
 No
48. Are you more willing to incorporate silence and solitude into your life now than before participating in this project?  
 Yes  
 No
49. Do you believe that you actually experience more silence and solitude in your life now than before participating in this project?  
 Yes  
 No

APPENDIX B:

Sermon Series

SERMON #1 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: A PERSONAL PILGRIMAGE

Scripture: Psalm 23:1

Summary: This is the first sermon in the series on silence and solitude and the role the discipline plays in our personal and spiritual formation. The sermon is an introductory sermon to the series. The format is that of a personal testimony. Its objective is to assist the hearer in understanding the purpose of the series through explaining the importance of silence and solitude in the preacher's life.

I. My life before solitude

II. My journey into solitude

III. The benefits of silence and solitude

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #2 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: RENEWAL FROM STRESS

Scripture: Jeremiah 9:2

Summary: This sermon looks at silence and solitude as God's method of renewal when we are tired and burned out from stress, people, and circumstances. The sermon focuses on Jeremiah the prophet, who longed for a desert retreat to get away from the stress which he encountered in his ministry/occupation.

- I. What kinds of stress do we experience in our lives?
- II. How do we cope with the stress in our lives?
- III. Have we considered taking time alone?

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #3 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: RENEWAL FOLLOWING CONFLICT

Scripture: I Kings 19:4

Summary: This sermon is based on the conflict between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and Jezebel. Elijah faced the conflict, but afterwards he was drained. He fled into the wilderness where he found renewal. The focus of this sermon is: how solitude renews us following conflict.

- I. The drain of conflict
- II. The kinds of conflict
  - A. Family conflict
  - B. Occupational conflict
  - C. Inner conflict
- III. The renewal of silence and solitude
  - A. The angel's ministry to Elijah
  - B. God's voice speaking to Elijah

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #4 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: RECHARGING OUR BATTERIES

Scripture: Matthew 4:23 and Luke 5:16

Summary: Jesus often withdrew to the solitude of a lonely mountain or the wilderness following great expenditures of energy. Example: the feeding of the 5,000 and numerous healings. This sermon raises the question: "Is there a pattern for us in Jesus' actions?".

- I. How busy are we?
- II. Do our batteries need recharging?
- III. How do we recharge our batteries?
- IV. What is the role of silence and solitude in this process of recharging our batteries?

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notes and resources:



## SERMON #5 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: PREPARATION FOR SERVICE

Scripture: Exodus 3:1

Summary: This sermon focuses on Moses, alone in the wilderness, tending Jethro's sheep. Moses did not know it at the time; but this was an important step in his preparation for leading the Hebrew slaves out of Egyptian bondage. This period of silence and solitude allowed Moses to do the following things:

- I. Meet God. We must be focused on God and rooted in God before we can render effective service.
- II. Reflect upon his past; reflect upon the mistakes he had made in the past, such as killing the Egyptian. We learn from our mistakes. One way to prepare for the future is by reflecting on the past.

What areas of service has God called us to? How do the first two points relate to those areas of service?

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #6 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: STRENGTH FOR THE TASK

Scripture: Luke 9:28-36 and 9:51

Summary: The transfiguration experience must be seen in relation to Jesus' decision to go to the cross. The hypothesis of this sermon: Jesus found in the retreat setting of the Mount of Transfiguration the strength to face the difficult journey to Golgotha.

- I. What are the difficult tasks we must face in our lives?
    - A. What are the daily tasks?
    - B. What are the crisis points?
    - C. What are the transition points in the life cycle?
  - II. Where do we find the strength to face the difficult times of our lives?
  - III. Have we ever considered God as a resource--nurturing our relationship with him through silence and solitude?
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## SERMON #7 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: GOD'S PROVING GROUND

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

Summary: This sermon notes that Jesus came face-to-face with the ultimate evil in the wilderness (the temptation experience). In silence and solitude Jesus triumphed over Satan. The cross made complete the victory that Jesus won in the wilderness. In this sense, the silence and solitude of the wilderness was Jesus' proving ground. How does this experience in the life of Jesus relate to our lives?

- I. In solitude we confront our biggest fears.
- II. In solitude we conquer our biggest fears.

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #8 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: GOD'S AGENT OF CHANGE

Scripture: Genesis 32:24

Summary: This sermon focuses on how God uses silence and solitude as an agent for changing us and helping us to grow. It looks at the change that occurred in Jacob. It notes that his time alone, when he wrestled with God, was the pivotal point in his life.

- I. Jacob's character before Gen. 32:24
- II. Jacob's character after Gen. 32:24
- III. The growing areas in our lives
  - A. How silence and solitude helps us grow
  - B. Silence and solitude create time to:
    - 1. Reflect
    - 2. Pray
    - 3. Develop a sense of resoluteness
    - 4. Develop a relationship with God

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #9 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE AND DECISION-MAKING

Scripture: Luke 6:12

Summary: Isn't it interesting that Jesus withdrew for a time alone before choosing his apostles? Is there a correlation between these two events? This sermon focuses on the value of silence and solitude in the decision-making process.

- I. The relationship between solitude and decisions
- II. The decisions we often have to make
  - A. Everyday decisions
  - B. Job and career decisions
  - C. Choice of marriage
  - D. Choices we make in our youths
  - E. Choices we make in old age
- III. The relationship between solitude and thinking
- IV. The relationship between solitude and hearing the voice of God
  - A. Biblical examples
  - B. Historical examples
  - C. Modern examples

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #10 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE AND GRIEF

Scripture: Matthew 14:1-13

Summary: In the above Scripture, Jesus withdrew to a lonely place following the death of John the Baptist. This sermon considers the correlation between Jesus' withdrawal and John's death. The sermon raises the following questions:

- I. How do we handle our grief?
- II. Is it good to be alone when we are bereaved?
  - A. Unhealthy grief
  - B. Healthy grief
- III. How can we find renewal through silence and solitude?

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #11 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE AND PRAYER

Scripture: Matthew 6:6

Summary: This sermon focuses on the relationship between solitude and prayer. The sermon notes that prayer is much more than just a "wish list" to God. Prayer is a relationship which we cultivate with God through the intentional practice of the discipline of silence and solitude. This sermon notes two discoveries the preacher has made about prayer:

- I. Most people don't understand what prayer is.
- II. Most people have never really learned how to pray.

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notes and resources:

## SERMON #12 IN A SERIES OF 12

Subject: SOLITUDE: GOD'S RECOMMENDATION

Scripture: Mark 6:31

Summary: This is the concluding sermon in the series on silence and solitude. The sermon notes that God recommends the discipline of silence and solitude for our lives. This is based on Jesus' advice to his apostles, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely places, and rest awhile." The sermon considers the following points:

- I. We were not made to live the extremely busy lives which many people live today.
- II. We must create an atmosphere of silence and solitude in the midst of our busyness.
- III. We must approach silence and solitude in a two-fold manner.
  - A. We must create times of outer silence.
  - B. We must create an inner sense of silence.

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notes and resources:



APPENDIX C:

Study Manual on Silence and Solitude

SOLITUDE: RENEWAL FROM STRESS

I. The Introduction

- A. The key verse in this study is Jeremiah 9:2. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.
- B. Describe in your own words what Jeremiah wants in 9:2.

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II. The Call of Jeremiah

- A. Read Jeremiah 1:4-10.
- B. What did God call Jeremiah to be? (v. 5) \_\_\_\_\_
- C. How did Jeremiah respond to God's call? (v. 6) \_\_\_\_\_
- D. What was God's response to Jeremiah? (vv. 7-8) \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Summarize in your own words the exchange between God and Jeremiah in vv. 4-10. \_\_\_\_\_

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III. The Message of Jeremiah

- A. Read Jeremiah 1:13-17. This was the message God instructed Jeremiah to proclaim to the people of Judah. In your own words, state the gist of that message. \_\_\_\_\_

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- B. Read Jeremiah 7:1-11. This is another example of the message Jeremiah was to proclaim to Judah and Jerusalem. In your own words, state the gist of that message. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- C. Do you think Jeremiah's message was a popular one? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why or why not \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- D. Read several of the following verses:

7:1	14:1	25:1	33:1	47:1
11:1	16:1	30:1	35:1	51:64
13:1	18:1	32:1	45:1	

Was Jeremiah faithful in proclaiming the Word of God? \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. The Results of the Message

- A. Read the following passages and describe what happened to Jeremiah because he preached the message God gave him.

Jeremiah 20:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 20:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 26:1-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 27:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 32:3 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 37:11-16 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 38:4-6 \_\_\_\_\_

Jeremiah 43:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

- B. Summarize in your own words what Jeremiah's life was like because he sought to be faithful to God. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- C. Now go back and re-read Jeremiah 9:2. Do you understand why Jeremiah wanted solitude? \_\_\_\_\_

- D. In your opinion, why would solitude have benefited Jeremiah? List as many benefits as you can think of. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### V. The Personal Application

- A. Can you think of difficult situations you have faced in the past? List them. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- B. Can you remember how you felt when you were going through your difficult times? Describe how you felt. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- C. What coping actions did you take? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- D. Did you seek solitude? \_\_\_\_\_
- E. If you sought solitude, how did it help you cope? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- F. If you did not seek solitude, can you speculate how it might have helped you to cope? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- G. Can you think of difficult situations you are going through right now? List. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- H. How might solitude help you through these current stressful situations? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

SOLITUDE: RENEWAL FOLLOWING CONFLICT

I. The Introduction

A. The key verse in this study is I Kings 19:4. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.

B. Describe Elijah's actions in I Kings 19:4. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

II. The Encounter with the Prophets of Baal

A. Read I Kings 18:17-18. What kind of religious practices had King Ahab introduced in Israel? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

B. Read I Kings 18:19-24.

How did Elijah propose to handle the problem of Baal-worship? (vv. 23-24) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What decision did Elijah ask the people of Israel to make? (v. 21) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

C. Read I Kings 18:25-40.

What happened when the prophets of Baal invoked the name of their god? (v. 26) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What happened when Elijah invoked the name of the Lord (v. 38) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What was the response of the Israelites to the contest on Mount Carmel? (v. 39) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What finally happened to the prophets of Baal? (v. 40) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

III. The Fate of Elijah

A. Read I Kings 19:1-2. What did Jezebel do when she learned that Elijah had defeated the prophets of baal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- B. Read I Kings 19:3-4. This passage describes Elijah's reaction to Jezebel's threats.

How did Elijah feel? (v. 3) \_\_\_\_\_

What did Elijah do? (v. 3) \_\_\_\_\_

What did Elijah do with his servant? (v. 3) \_\_\_\_\_

- C. Now go back and re-read the key verse, I Kings 19:4.

Where did Elijah go? \_\_\_\_\_

Who went with him? \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. The Solitude of the Wilderness

- A. Read I Kings 19:4-18.

Describe Elijah's physical and emotional state in the wilderness (v. 4). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How was Elijah strengthened in the wilderness? (vv. 5-8)

\_\_\_\_\_

Where did Elijah go after his strength returned? (v. 8) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe Elijah's encounter with God at Horeb. (vv. 9-18)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- B. Summarize, in your own opinion, what happened to Elijah when he entered the solitude of the wilderness. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

#### V. The Personal Reflection

- A. Can you recall times when you found strength in being alone? Describe them. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- B. Can you recall times when you experienced conflict? List the major conflicts you have experienced. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- C. In what specific ways did silence and solitude give you strength? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- D. How do you think Elijah found strength and renewal through silence and solitude? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- E. Have you, like Elijah, ever experienced the presence of God in moments of silence and solitude? Describe those moments and the feelings you had. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SOLITUDE: RECHARGING OUR BATTERIES

I. The Introduction

- A. The key verses in this study are Matthew 14:23 and Luke 5:16. Read each verse several times. Become familiar with them. Keep them in the back of your mind.
- B. What did Jesus do in Matthew 14:23? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- C. What did Jesus do in Luke 5:16? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. The Feeding of the Five-thousand

- A. Recall what Jesus did in Matthew 14:23.
- B. What happened immediately before Jesus' withdrawal? (see Matthew 14:14-21) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- C. Note the cause and effect relationship between Matthew 14:14-21 and Matthew 14:23. That relationship is summarized in the first word of Matthew 14:22, "then" in the Revised Standard Version.
- D. Summarize in your own words the cause and effect relationship between these two passages of Scripture. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- E. Why do you think Jesus sought solitude after feeding the five-thousand? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- F. List some situations in which you have had to deal with people. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- G. Do you often find yourself tired after dealing with people? \_\_\_\_\_. If so, how do you renew your strength? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- H. Have you ever considered solitude as a means of renewal?\_\_\_\_\_
- I. How can solitude be renewing?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- J. How was solitude renewing for Jesus following the feeding of the five-thousand?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### III. The Healing of the Leper

- A. Recall Jesus' custom, according to Luke 5:16.
- B. What precipitated Jesus' withdrawal on this occasion? (See Luke 5:12-15)\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Note the cause and effect relationship between Luke 5:12-15 and Luke 5:16. Express that relationship in your own words.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Do you see a similarity between Jesus' actions in Luke 5:16 and previously in Matthew 14:23?\_\_\_\_\_. If so, what is that similarity?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- E. What conclusions can be drawn from these two Scriptures about the relationship between Jesus' public life and his private life?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- F. What lessons can we learn from the alternating rhythm of public service and private renewal in the life of Jesus?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### IV. The Personal Reflection

- A. Do you have to deal with the public often?\_\_\_\_\_. In what capacity?\_\_\_\_\_
- With what kind of people do you work?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Is public life draining for you?\_\_\_\_\_
- C. Do you have a time and place where you can be alone?\_\_\_\_\_



- D. If you have a time and place to be alone, when and where is that place? \_\_\_\_\_
- E. What do you do when you go to your private place? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- F. If you do not have a time and place to be alone, do you feel the need for one? \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Where are some places you could go to be alone? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- H. What kinds of activities would you engage in if you had a quiet place? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SOLITUDE: PREPARATION FOR SERVICE

I. The Introduction

A. The key verse in this study is Exodus 3:1. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.

B. What was Moses doing in Exodus 3:1? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

C. Where was Moses in Exodus 3:1? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

D. The desert in the Bible was often a place of aloneness and solitude. Can you think of examples of other biblical characters who found solitude in the desert? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

II. The Life of Moses before Exodus 3:1

A. Read Exodus, chapter 2.

B. Summarize the life of Moses before Exodus 3:1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

C. What did God call Moses to do? (Ex. 3:10) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

D. Did anything in Moses' early life (chapter 2) prepare him to receive God's call and fulfill his mission? \_\_\_\_\_. Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

III. The Life of Moses after Exodus 3:1

A. What had to happen to Moses before he could become God's instrument for freeing the Hebrew slaves? (Exodus 3:1-4)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- B. Could Moses have easily encountered God as busy as his life in Egypt was?\_\_\_\_\_. Why or why not?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- C. What kind of life situation (busy or solitary) proved the most conducive to Moses' encounter with God?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Go back and re-read Exodus 3:1. Does the significance of this moment become understandable?\_\_\_\_\_
- What was the significance of Moses being alone before God in this Scripture?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. The Personal Reflection

- A. What ways have you served God in the past? What are some ways you are serving him currently?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Do you believe you need (or needed) some kind of preparation for the service you rendered to the Lord?\_\_\_\_\_. What did of preparation did you need?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- What kind of preparation did you have?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Do you believe solitude would have been a helpful tool in preparing you for God's service?\_\_\_\_\_. Summarize the benefits solitude could provide in preparing you for God's service.\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Do you feel God calling you to some specific service at the present time?\_\_\_\_\_. If yes, how might silence and solitude help to equip you for that service?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Have you ever had a personal encounter with the Lord (like Moses had in Exodus 3:1)?\_\_\_\_\_. If so, as you reflect upon it, were you alone at the time?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- F. How can silence and solitude prepare us to encounter God?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

SOLITUDE: STRENGTH FOR THE TASK

I. The Introduction

A. The key verses in this study are Luke 9:28 and Luke 22:41.  
Read these verses several times. Become familiar with them.  
Keep them in the back of your mind.

B. What did Jesus do in Luke 9:28? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. What did Jesus do in Luke 22:41? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. The Transfiguration Experience

A. Recall the key verse, Luke 9:28.

B. What happened immediately after Luke 9:28? (vv. 29-31) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. What did Jesus discuss with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of  
Transfiguration? (v. 31) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Do you think there was any connection between the solitude  
Jesus sought on the Mount of Transfiguration and his pending  
crucifixion (which he discussed with Moses and Elijah)? \_\_\_\_\_.  
If so, what was the connection? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E. In your opinion, why did Jesus go up on the Mount of  
Transfiguration? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

III. The Gethsemane Experience

A. Recall the key verse, Luke 22:41.

B. What were the circumstances surrounding Jesus' withdrawal  
into the Garden of Gethsemane (What significant event was  
about to happen to Jesus)? \_\_\_\_\_

- C. What kind of emotional, mental, and physical state do you observe Jesus to have been in at this time? (vv. 43-44)

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- D. Do you see any significance in Jesus' seeking solitude right before the crucifixion? \_\_\_\_\_. Why do you believe Jesus sought the solitude of Gethsemane? \_\_\_\_\_

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#### IV. The Personal Reflection

The two examples given in this study--the Transfiguration experience and the Gethsemane experience--exemplify the way Jesus used silence and solitude to prepare for the most important task of his life, the task of effecting redemption through his crucifixion.

- A. What are some important tasks for which you have had to prepare? \_\_\_\_\_

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- B. Did you use silence and solitude to help you prepare for these tasks? \_\_\_\_\_. If so, did it help? \_\_\_\_\_. If it helped, how so? \_\_\_\_\_

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- C. In these examples, Jesus faced the task of going to the cross. That task was a spiritual battle. What spiritual battles have you fought? \_\_\_\_\_

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- D. Did silence and solitude help you to win your spiritual battle? \_\_\_\_\_. If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_

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- E. If you did not use silence and solitude, speculate as to how the discipline might have been helpful in your spiritual battle(s). \_\_\_\_\_

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SOLITUDE: GOD'S PROVING GROUND

I. The Introduction

A. The key verse in this study is Matthew 4:1. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.

B. What did Jesus do in Matthew 4:1? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

II. The Temptation Experience

A. What event preceded Jesus' temptation in the wilderness? (vv. 13-17) \_\_\_\_\_

B. If the wilderness temptation followed Jesus' baptism, then at what point in Jesus' ministry did his wilderness temptation occur? Beginning? Middle? End? \_\_\_\_\_

C. What three temptations did Satan place before Jesus?  
 4:3 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4:8-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

D. How did Jesus respond to Satan's temptations?  
 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 4:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

E. What happened to Jesus after Satan left? (4:11) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

F. What other servant of the Lord experienced something similar at a difficult time in his ministry? (I Kings 19:4-8) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

III. The Inferences from Scripture

- A. Does the Bible say that Jesus was accompanied into the wilderness by another person, or does it imply that he went alone? (See Mark 1:12 for additional information)\_\_\_\_\_

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- B. Consider the following inferences from the Scripture:
  - 1. Jesus went alone into the wilderness to encounter Satan.
  - 2. The temptation experience occurred near the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, following his baptism.
  - 3. The temptation experience, therefore, proved the acid test of Jesus' ministry. If Jesus could defeat Satan and temptation here, at the outset of his ministry, he could continue to do so throughout the remainder of his ministry.

IV. The Purpose of Solitude

- A. How did Jesus use solitude as a proving ground for his ministry?\_\_\_\_\_

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- B. How did Jesus use Scripture to defeat Satan in his temptation experience? (4:4, 4:7, & 4:10)\_\_\_\_\_

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- C. Have you ever been tempted to commit sin?\_\_\_\_\_. Reflect on some of the temptation experiences you have had. How were they similar to Jesus' temptation experience?\_\_\_\_\_

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- D. How did you overcome your temptation experiences?\_\_\_\_\_

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- E. How can silence and solitude be effective tools in helping us overcome temptation?\_\_\_\_\_

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## SOLITUDE: GOD'S AGENT FOR CHANGE

I. The Introduction

A. The key verse in this study is Genesis 32:24. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.

B. What event happened in Genesis 32:24? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Read the Scripture surrounding the key verse--Genesis 32:22-30. Summarize the entire episode. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

II. The Significance of the Encounter

A. What kind of person was Jacob before his encounter with the Lord at Peniel? (Genesis 27:1-35, especially v. 35; and Genesis 30:25-43, especially vv. 41-42.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

B. What kind of person did Jacob gradually become after his encounter with the Lord at Peniel? (Genesis 33:1-15)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Having looked at Jacob before and after his encounter with the Lord, can we say that this encounter at Peniel proved to be a major turning point in Jacob's life? \_\_\_\_\_. Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Go back to the key verse, Genesis 32:24. Note that Jacob was alone when he encountered the Lord. How did he prepare to be alone? (vv. 22-23) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



- E. Can you think of other biblical characters who met God when they were alone? List as many as you can. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### III. The Personal Reflection

- A. Have you ever encountered God in as realistic a manner as Jacob did? \_\_\_\_\_. Is God as real and personal to you as he was to Jacob? \_\_\_\_\_. Would you like for God to be as real to you as he was to Jacob, if he isn't already that real? \_\_\_\_\_. Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- B. How much time do you spend alone with the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Do you make preparation to spend time alone with the Lord--like Jacob did? \_\_\_\_\_. If so, what plans do you make to be alone with God? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Do you have a daily quiet time? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you pray daily? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you read the Bible daily? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you read inspirational books? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you meditate? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Do you often sit quietly and observe nature? \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Has there been a major spiritual turning point in your life? \_\_\_\_\_. If so, describe it. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Are there any concerns you are wrestling with right now, like Jacob wrestled with the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- G. How could silence and solitude help you to deal with your concerns and worries? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## SOLITUDE AND DECISION-MAKING

I. The Introduction

A. The key verse in this study is Luke 6:12. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.

B. What did Jesus do in Luke 6:12? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. How long did Jesus remain in prayer? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. The Choosing of the Apostles

A. What did Jesus do when his night of prayer had ended? (Luke 6:13-16) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Note the cause and effect relationship between v. 12 and vv. 13-16. That relationship is expressed in the first phrase of v. 13--"and when it was day...." Express in your own words the cause and effect relationship. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Why do you believe Jesus sought solitude on this occasion? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

III. The Personal Reflection

A. What are some important decisions you have made or you are facing right now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. What are some methods you use for making important decisions? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- C. Have you ever wanted to be alone to think about an important decision?\_\_\_\_\_. Reflect upon that experience.\_\_\_\_\_

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- D. How can silence and solitude be helpful to us when we are making important decisions?\_\_\_\_\_

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## SOLITUDE AND GRIEF

I. The Introduction

A. The key verse in this study is Matthew 14:13. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.

B. What did Jesus do in Matthew 14:13? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. The Execution of John the Baptist

A. Read the passage of Scripture immediately preceding the key verse--Matthew 14:1-12.

B. Note the cause and effect relationship between Matthew 14:1-12 and 14:13. That relationship is expressed in the first phrase of Matthew 14:13, "Now when Jesus heard this...."

C. What do you conclude prompted Jesus' withdrawal to a lonely place? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Why do you think Jesus sought solitude following the death of John the Baptist? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E. What kind of relationship did Jesus and John the Baptist have? See the following verses of Scripture :  
Luke 1:5-63, especially v. 36 \_\_\_\_\_  
John 1:6-8 \_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew 3:13-16 \_\_\_\_\_

F. Having established the close relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist, does it become clear why Jesus sought solitude following John's death? \_\_\_\_\_. Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

III. The Personal Reflection

A. Who are some close friends or loved-ones that you have lost through death? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- B. Reflect upon how you felt when these persons died. Write your feelings. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- C. List some of the ways that you dealt with your grief. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Who are some important people in your life that have been lost to you through means other than death (for example: friends who moved away, divorces in the family, and close relationships broken through disagreements)? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Reflect upon how you felt when these relationships ended. Write your feelings. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Did you try to work through your grief, or did you just feel helpless and victimized by your grief? \_\_\_\_\_  
 If you tried to work through your grief, describe your efforts. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- G. How might you have utilized silence and solitude to bring healing when these relationships ended? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### IV. The Harmful Effects of Solitude

We have considered how silence and solitude might be helpful when coping with grief. We now consider how silence and solitude might be harmful under the same circumstances.

- A. Read John 20:24-25.
- B. What happened in these two verses? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- C. Can you speculate as to why Thomas was not with the other disciples when the risen Christ appeared to them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- D. What happened to Thomas' faith as a result of his separating himself from the other disciples after the death of Jesus? (v. 25) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- E. Can we conclude, therefore, that there is a solitude that helps us cope with grief (such as Jesus' withdrawal after the death of John the Baptist), and there is also a kind of solitude following death that is unhealthy? \_\_\_\_\_
- F. How can we distinguish between healthy solitude and unhealthy solitude? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- G. How can solitude be harmful when you are dealing with grief? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SOLITUDE AND PRAYER

I. The Introduction

- A. The key verse in this study is Matthew 6:6. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.
- B. What did Jesus advise us to do in Matthew 6:6? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- C. According to Matthew 6:6, what is the connection between prayer and solitude? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- D. Why do you think Jesus linked prayer and solitude? (Matthew 6:5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

II. Other Examples of Prayer and Solitude

- A. Can you think of other examples besides Matthew 6:6 where prayer and solitude are closely linked? Describe the setting of each:  
Matthew 14:23  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew 26:36  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
Luke 5:16  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
Luke 6:12  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Did Jesus practice what he preached? \_\_\_\_\_

III. The Personal Reflection

- A. Do you pray regularly? \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Do you have a quiet place, like Jesus had, where you can be alone to pray? \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Where were Jesus' quiet places? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- D. Can you think of some quiet places where you might enjoy being alone, places where others would not disturb you, where you might be able to pray without interruption?\_\_\_\_\_. List the places you think of.\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- E. If you could go to one of these quiet places, what kinds of exercise could you employ to deepen your relationship with the Lord?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Can you envision what such quiet times would do for your spiritual life?\_\_\_\_\_. Write down the benefits you envision you would receive from uninterrupted prayer in a quiet place.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Have you ever tried to pray or have a quiet time when your environment was noisy--when the television was playing, or when children were demanding your attention, or when the telephone was ringing?\_\_\_\_\_. Reflect on these times. Describe your feelings over wanting and needing to pray but not being able to pray because of the noise.\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- H. In Matthew 6:6, Jesus advises us to go into our closet and shut the door in order to pray. The closet represents solitude. How can you establish a prayer closet, if you do not already have one?\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



AN EXERCISE IN SEPARATION FROM THE OUTER WORLD

I. The Introduction

A. The key verse in this exercise is Mark 6:31. Read this verse several times. Become familiar with it. Keep it in the back of your mind.

B. What did Jesus tell his apostles to do in Mark 6:31? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

II. The Mission of the Twelve

A. Read Mark 6:7-13.

What general responsibility did Jesus place upon his apostles in this passage of Scripture? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

What specific duties did Jesus tell the apostles they were to do when they went out to minister? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

B. Do you think these responsibilities and duties were tiring and stressful to the disciples? \_\_\_\_\_. Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

C. Read Mark 6:30.

What did the disciples do in this verse? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

III. The Cause and Effect Relationships

A. Do you see the relationship between the disciples' ministry in Mark 6:7-13 and their report to Jesus in Mark 6:30? \_\_\_\_\_ Explain the relationship. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



- B. Reflect upon your overall lifestyle. What are some of the major activities and responsibilities that consume your time and energy? List them. \_\_\_\_\_

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- C. Reflect upon Jesus' words to his disciples following their busyness--Mark 6:31.

1. Close your eyes and envision Jesus before you.
2. Hear Jesus speaking to you: "Come away by yourself to a lonely place, and rest awhile."
3. Recall the duties and responsibilities of your daily life. One-by-one, turn them over to Jesus. It may be helpful for you to say, "Jesus, I give you my... (finish the statement with the activity or responsibility you are surrendering)."
4. Now ask Jesus to remove any concern you still have for the responsibilities you just surrendered. Ask him to take you to your own special "lonely place" where you can rest from your labors and find spiritual, physical, and emotional renewal.
5. Sit quietly with your eyes closed for as long as you need to. Make a conscious effort to relax your mind, your shoulders, arms, legs, and other parts of your body that may be tense.
6. Envision your special "lonely place." It may be a place in the woods, or by a lake, or a restful spot in your home such as a comfortable chair. Be aware that only you and Jesus are there.

- D. After you open your eyes and return to the group, consider yourself separated from the cares and responsibilities of your daily life. Remember, you have turned them over to Jesus. They are his concerns now; not yours. You are free to relax and seek renewal.

## A CLOSING SERVICE OF SILENT COMMUNION

The congregation assembles in silence  
and waits expectantly on the Lord.

## \*THE GREETING

Leader: The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
People: The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you,  
also.

## \*THE HYMN

"Take Time to be Holy"

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## \*THE LITANY

Psalm 62

Leader: For God alone my soul waits in silence.  
People: From him comes my salvation  
Leader: He only is my rock and my salvation.  
People: I shall not be greatly moved.  
Leader: For God alone my soul waits in silence.  
People: For my hope is from him.  
Leader: He only is my rock and my salvation.  
People: I shall not be shaken.  
Leader: On God rests my deliverance and my honor.  
People: My mighty rock, my refuge is God.  
Leader: Trust in him at all times, O people.  
People: Pour out your heart before him.  
Unison: God is a refuge for us.

## THE CONFESSION

## THE PRAYER OF CONFESSION\*\*

unison

Our heavenly Father, who by thy love hast made us,  
and through thy love has kept us, and in thy love  
wouldst make us perfect: we humbly confess that we  
have not loved thee with all our heart and soul and  
mind and strength, and that we have not loved one  
another as Christ hath loved us. Thy life is within  
our souls, but our selfishness hath hindered thee.  
We have not lived by faith. We have resisted thy  
Spirit. We have neglected thine inspirations.

Forgive what we have been. Help us to amend what  
we are. And in thy Spirit direct what we shall be,  
that thou mayest come into the full glory of thy  
creation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## THE MOMENTS OF SILENT CONFESSION

## THE WORDS OF PARDON AND ASSURANCE

## THE ACT OF PRAISE

## THE PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING\*\*

unison

O God of love, we yield thee thanks for whatsoever thou hast given us richly to enjoy; for health and vigor, for the love and care of home, for joys of friendship, and for every good gift of happiness and strength. We praise thee for all thy servants who by their example and encouragement have helped us on our way, and for every vision of thyself which thou hast ever given us in sacrament or prayer; and we humbly beseech thee that all these thy benefits we may use in thy service and to the glory of thy holy name; through Jesus Christ thy Son our Lord. Amen.

## THE MOMENTS OF SILENT PRAISE

## THE MOMENTS OF INTERCESSION

## THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION\*\*

unison

Remember, O Lord, thy Church upon the earth. Deepen her influence and extend her power for good, till the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord.

We pray for our beloved land: for our leaders and rulers, and for all who have part in public service. Make them pure in motive, wise in counsel, and strong in action, doing right in the fear of thy holy name.

Look down in mercy upon our distraught and fevered world: forgive the mistaken ambitions, the selfish passions, and the presumptuous claims of men. Remove all suspicion and bitterness from among the nations, and bring them to peace through the redeeming love of Christ.

Have mercy, Lord, upon those who are passing through trials: the poor, the sick, the anxious, the oppressed, those who are in danger from the fury of the elements or from the violence of men. Inspire in us and in our fellow men the will to help our suffering brethren. Heal, protect, and strengthen them according to their need. Comfort those in sorrow with the comfort which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We pray for our families, that, surrounded by thy love, they may be kept in health and joy, and abide in safety and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## THE MOMENTS OF SILENT INTERCESSION

## THE PETITION FOR OUR NEEDS

## THE PRAYER OF PETITION\*\*

unison

O Thou almighty one, who art the one God and Father of all, who hast breathed thine own Spirit into thy children, and made them to be members of one family; we bring to thee, in our common prayer, the burdens of each who bows with us, and of all throughout the world who stand in need of thy grace. Give us love above all gifts, that we may be delivered from all blindness and prejudice, and from whatever else would turn our hearts from one another and from thee. Fill us with that most excellent grace of charity, which is patient and kind, and thinks only good. And create in our hearts, we beseech thee, such a sincere love of one another, that we may be children of our Father in heaven and true followers of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## THE MOMENTS OF SILENT PETITION

## THE MINISTRY OF WORD AND TABLE

THE READING OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE	Ecclesiastes 3:7
THE COMMUNION MEDITATION	"A Time for Silence"
THE BREAKING OF THE LOAF	in silence
THE PASSING OF THE CUP	in silence

## THE DISMISSAL WITH SILENCE

## THE MOMENTS OF QUIET REFLECTION

## THE BENEDICTION IN SILENCE

## THE RE-ENTRY INTO THE WORLD

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\*\* Board of Publication of The Methodist Church, Inc., The Book of Worship for Church and Home (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1965). All prayers used in "A Closing Service of Silent Communion--Confession, Thanksgiving, Intercession, and Petition--are taken from this reference book.

APPENDIX D:  
Correlation of Data

Table 1  
Most Important Daily Activities

Pre-test Data		Post-test Data	
Responses	Frequency	Responses	Frequency
Family Relationships	10	Devotional Activities	12
Devotional Activities	10	Family Relationships	7
Work/Housework	6	Work/Housework	5
Exercise	3	Recreational Pursuits	3
Building Friendships	2	Helping People	1

Table 2  
Most Time-consuming Daily Activities

Pre-test Data		Post-test Data	
Responses	Frequency	Responses	Frequency
Work/Housework	22	Work/Housework	18
Reading	3	Television	3
Family Needs	3	Reading	2
Television	2	Family Needs	2
		Recreational Pursuits	2

Table 3  
Activities in Morning Routines

Pre-test Data Responses	Data Frequency	Post-test Data Responses	Data Frequency
Work/Housework	27	Work/Housework	18
Breakfast	14	Devotional Activities	8
Personal Hygiene	12	Personal Hygiene	7
Devotional Activities	7	Breakfast	6
Reading Newspaper	4	Reading Newspaper	3

Table 4  
Percent of Time spent with People

Pre-test Data Responses	Data Frequency	Post-test Data Responses	Data Frequency
10 Percent	1	10 Percent	-
20 Percent	-	20 Percent	1
30 Percent	-	30 Percent	1
40 Percent	-	40 Percent	-
50 Percent	2	50 Percent	-
60 Percent	1	60 Percent	1
70 Percent	2	70 Percent	-
80 Percent	2	80 Percent	4
90 Percent	9	90 Percent	3
All Day	1	All Day	2



Table 5

Number of Respondents Who Enjoy Being With People  
a Large Percent of the Day

Pre-test Data		Post-test Data	
Responses	Frequency	Responses	Frequency
Enjoy Being With People	10	Enjoy Being With People	8
Do Not Enjoy Being With People	3	Do Not Enjoy Being With People	2

Table 6

Number of Respondents Who Have Daily Quiet Time

Pre-test Data		Post-test Data	
Responses	Frequency	Responses	Frequency
Have Daily Quiet Time	11	Have Daily Quiet Time	8
No Daily Quiet Time	5	No Daily Quiet Time	4

Table 7

Number of Respondents Who Have Quiet Time  
When They Can Get Around To It

Pre-test Data		Post-test Data	
Responses	Frequency	Responses	Frequency
Have Periodic Quiet Time	7	Have Periodic Quiet Time	2
No Periodic Quiet Time	3	No Periodic Quiet Time	1

Table 8  
Rituals/Activities Comprising Quiet Times

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Prayer	12	11
Bible-reading	10	10
Reading Inspirational Literature	9	11
Keeping a Journal	1	1
Thinking/Reflecting	9	8
Enjoying Nature	7	5

Table 9  
Frequency of Prayer

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Several Times Per Day	11	10
Once Per Day	3	2
Several Times Per Week	-	-
When You Feel the Need	5	2
Never	-	-

Table 10  
Frequency of Writing in Journal

Responses	Frequency of Response	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Daily	-	1
Weekly	-	-
When You Feel the Need	2	2
Seldom	2	2
Never	12	7

Table 11  
Frequency of Bible-reading

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
More Than Once Per Day	1	-
Once a Day	5	5
Several Times Per Week	6	6
When You Can Find the Time	2	1
When You Feel the Need	2	1
Seldom	1	1
Never	-	-

Table 12

Frequency of Reading Inspirational Literature  
Other Than the Bible

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Daily	-	5
Several Times Per Week	6	5
When You Have Nothing Else to Do	-	-
Seldom	7	2
Never	-	-

Table 13

Frequency of Meditation

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Several Times Per Day	5	3
Once a Day	2	4
Several Times Per Week	4	3
Seldom	5	1
Never	-	-

Table 14

Respondents with Designated Places  
for Devotional Activities

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
For Praying	6	6
For Writing in Journal	-	-
For Bible-reading	8	5
For Reading Religious Literature	5	4
For Meditating	3	4

Table 15

Favorite Places for Devotional Activities

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
A Special Room in the House	4	6
A Comfortable chair	3	3
While Walking	1	-
The Breakfast Table	1	1
The Woods	-	1
The Patio	-	1

Table 16

Respondents with Designated Times  
for Devotional Activities

Responses	Frequency of Response	
	Pre-test	Post-test
For Praying	8	8
For Writing in Journal	6	1
For Bible-reading	-	5
For Reading Religious Literature	4	4
For Meditating	4	4

Table 17

Favorite Times for Devotional Activities

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
In the Morning	6	5
In the Evening Before Bed	2	3
In the Mid-afternoon	-	1
Both Morning and Evening	1	1

Table 18

Comparison of Respondents Who Keep Sound Systems  
Turned on in Their Homes

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Sound System Turned On in Home More Often Than Not	9	5
Sound System Turned Off in Home More Often Than Not	6	7

Table 19

Comparison of Respondents Who Keep Sound Systems  
Turned on in Their Automobiles

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Sound System Turned On in Automobile More Often Than Not	8	9
Sound System Turned Off in Automobile More Often Than Not	8	2

Table 20

## Number of Respondents Who Take Walks Alone

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	3	-
Sometimes	8	10
Never	5	2

Table 21

## Number of Respondents Who Sit Alone and Daydream

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	5	1
Sometimes	9	10
Never	2	1

Table 22

## Number of Respondents Who Read Alone

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	4	3
Sometimes	10	9
Never	2	-



Table 23

Number of Respondents Who Take  
Trips/Vacations/Retreats Alone

Responses	Frequency of Response	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	0	0
Sometimes	1	1
Never	15	11

Table 24

Number of Respondents Who Feel the Need  
to Get Away from Daily Pressures

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	1	2
Sometimes	14	9
Never	-	1

Table 25

Number of Respondents Who Need More Personal Time

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	1	2
Sometimes	13	8
Never	2	2

Table 26

Number of Respondents Who Feel Like  
 People/Circumstances/Schedules  
 Dominate Their Lives

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	3	3
Sometimes	12	8
Never	1	1

Table 27

Number of Respondents Who Feel Their Lives  
Are Out of Control

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	1	-
Sometimes	9	10
Never	6	2

Table 28

Number of Respondents Who Want to Slow  
the Pace of Their Lives

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	1	2
Sometimes	12	8
Never	3	2

Table 29

Number of Respondents Who Want More Order/Structure  
in Their Lives

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Frequently	5	1
Sometimes	9	10
Never	1	1

Table 30

How Respondents Rate Their Lives on a  
Day-to-Day Basis

Responses	Frequency of Responses	
	Pre-test	Post-test
Extremely Busy	1	1
Busy	7	6
Relaxed	7	5
Not Busy Enough	1	-

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