

## Silence/Solitude – Eighth Grade

*In this session we are introducing the spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude! While these are two distinct disciplines, in practice they often go hand in hand. Our world is a particularly noisy one. We live in the Information Age, we walk around with the sum of all human knowledge in our hands, advertisements are plastered on every screen and surface around us, and our attention spans have been whittled down by social media platforms designed to distract. In a world like ours, silence and solitude are rarely natural occurrences. Yet they are both essential to the health of the human soul. We were not created to sustain constant input, we desperately need space for our souls to breathe, for our minds to synthesize and contemplate all we have seen and experienced in a day. For our souls to breathe deeply and to flourish into all we were created for, to enjoy true intimacy with the Lord, we must reclaim these lost practices of silence and solitude. And that's what we want to talk about today.*

### Introducing the Subject

*Discussing what our students already think and feel about these concepts is a crucial step in helping them build a healthy, biblical understanding of them. We are not building from scratch, we are building with feelings and opinions and experiences unique to each of our students and in order for us to build, we must first understand the materials. Spend some time asking your group these questions.*

-How much time in your average day do you spend alone? What do you do with that alone time?

-How much time in your average day do you spend without any input...no music, Tik Tok, Netflix, no noise?

-How do you feel about alone time? Do you enjoy it? Do you feel refreshed after it?

-How do you feel about silence? What do you do in silence? Do you seek out silence or do you avoid it?

-Do you think your life, your mental health, your mood, would improve with more silence in your day to day life? Why or why not?

-Do you think the amount of noise in our daily lives is healthy? Why or why not?

-Why do you avoid silence and solitude?

### Scripture Study

*As you transition to the Scripture Study portion of this session, remind students that Scripture is where we turn for truth. We want to continually reiterate that we study Scripture not just for the "Christian take" on a matter, but God's revealed word, given to us out of love for our good*

-First, we are going to look at Jesus' example. Jesus' life was lived in perfection, his habits, his rhythms, the way he reacted to situations, can all teach us more about what God's perfect plan for humanity is. Read these verses together, and then discuss the following questions.

-Read Mark 1:35, Luke 5:16, and Luke 6:12-13 together.

-What is Jesus doing in these verses? (*Seeking out solitude, going to a quiet place, and praying*)

-Why do you think he felt the need to do this? (*Answers may vary, and encourage them all! But one thing we want to note is that Jesus, even being fully God, still had the very human need for this practice.*)

-What did Jesus do in the silence and solitude?

### Practical Application

We have seen the example of Jesus, his rhythms and habits surrounding solitude and silence. We have seen and talked about how he spent his time alone and in the quiet, why he needed that, and why he needed it so often! Now let's look at our own habits surrounding solitude and silence! *Often, we don't even realize the habits we're forming until we slow down and take an intentional look at them, so lets do that together now!*

-Have students take a piece of paper and make a t-chart with seven columns. Title each column with the days of the week! Now ask students to block off times in each day they typically spend alone with one color. (Remind them that times where they're on Face Time or they're messaging friends doesn't count as alone time). Then instruct them to take a second color and block out any times in their day they spend in silence, no music, no tv show in the background, just silence.

-How much time each week do you spend alone?

-What do you normally do with your alone time?

-How do you feel after you spend time alone, spending that alone time how do you do now?

-Do you feel comfortable spending time in solitude? Why or why not?

-Do you feel like your current use of solitude is productive for you? What small change could you make to make that time more fruitful?

-How much time each week do you spend in silence?

-What do you normally do when your environment is quiet? How do you spend your time in silence?

-How do you feel after you spend time in silence?

-Do you feel comfortable spending time in silence? Why or why not?

-Do you feel like your life could use more spaces of quiet? What are some pockets of time in your existing rhythm where you could eliminate some noise?

-What results/difference do you think you'd see in your life if you intentionally built more silence and solitude into your weekly rhythms?

-Are those differences worth the effort to change to you?

-What is the hardest mental block for you when it comes to entering into silence and solitude?

*Pray together as a group, and if your group seems ready, maybe even try sitting in silence together as a first step towards embracing this critical discipline!*