

SUB TOPIC THEME:
Silence and Solitude

Lesson Objective:

To look at what it means to be silent with God and give handy tips for unplugging from the noisy world we live in to include abstaining from the internet and social networks. Often youth do not know how to be still or to be silent. They live in a world of constant noise and stimulation from gadgets.



Set Up Info:

Supplies Needed:

1. Bibles, pens, journals or pieces of paper for students to write thoughts and prayers.
2. Copies of the Student Response Sheet (printed below).
3. Secure place to put personal property and a quiet location where students may separate from others to read, write, pray and be still.
4. Personal or work phone numbers for parents/guardians to have for emergency contact purposes during the solitude.
5. Optional would be music/guitar to prepare students with quiet worship.
6. Method/device to round everyone back up when the time alone is done (i.e. a cow bell, whistle, etc.)

Instructive Prep:

Being alone can have such a negative connotation for the average teen. A typical military teen sees the moments / seasons of being alone as a result of moving or having friends move. Or they see this as a punishment for a behavior their parent or teacher is trying to correct. We want to offer them a chance to consider the benefit of seeking alone times / quiet times with their loving Lord.

This session is designed to help students look at contemplative practices of silence and meditation in a way that develops their intimacy with God and motivates them to practice meditating and praying using a journal or abstaining from technical devices like their phones and MP3. For emergency purposes be sure to give out / email / text to the guardians for the students

your cell phone number for contact during this activity. Find a location that is conducive to the teens being alone, quiet and able to focus on their time alone with minimal distraction.

INTRO:

We can be overwhelmed with all the activities and stimulation that our modern world has to offer. Depending on where we are living, we can have multiple TVs, music, internet access, phones, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube; so many opportunities for multitasking stimulation. It is not normal for us to experience being still or alone in the context of something we choose to pursue or to practice on a weekly if not daily basis. Often we see these alone times as punishment or something forced upon us because of a PCS that isolates us for a time period until we have friends or we relocate to civilization. We will gather up all our cell phones and electronic gadgets we may have brought with us tonight. We ask that you remain within the designated boundaries of _____.

Intro Story:

We are going to practice being still with God. Each of you has a Bible, a pen and some paper. We are going to spend some time focusing on listening to God. We do this in many ways, but one way we don't often utilize is through being still and through meditation. The handout will guide you through your time. There is no right or wrong way to do this. We are just providing a kickstart and a time frame to practice solitude.

Now meditation comes from a Hebrew word, "hagah," which defined in Strong's means

"to moan, mutter, ponder, imagine"

"to contemplate something as you repeat the words"

Visualize a cow chewing on its cud. (You can check out the seemingly boring, but crucial process on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TRHcEQYBQPw>) As the cow eats grass she continues to chew and to process the food by swallowing and regurgitating the grass over and over again until the digestive process is finished. Since some animals like cows do not have the enzymes to break down their food, they require the process of rumination. You could say we lack the ability to fully take in the Scriptures clearly, so we need to ponder on the verses more extensively to fully get from the Bible God's message for us.

Psalm 119 verse 148 says: "All night long I lie awake, to meditate on your instructions." We want to stay awake and consider what it means to meditate on God's instructions.

As you begin to make this a part of your life, you may have yourself awakened in the night or “tapped on the shoulder” during a moment when you are alone to stop what you are doing and come away to a quiet place to be with Jesus and his Word. Our prayer is that you will fall in love with him through his book and that you’ll want to read it and meditate on it day and night all through your life.

STUDENT REPONSES:

Some things are better experienced than explained. Silence and Solitude are just such things. So, as a group, take your journal, Bible and pen – head out for your time alone with God. Be sure to get away from distractions and be still.

Psalm 119:41-48

- Read through these verses. Feel free to read verses before and after these selected verses.
- Write in your journal the *first impressions* you have from the verses.
- *Reread* the passage again s-l-o-w-l-y. Keep reading the passage over and over again stopping to consider the *messages, words, the meaning*. “Chew your cud”. Ponder what is being said.
- Now be quiet / still – talk to God and be quiet. Let the Holy Spirit tell you about this verse and what God wants you to take away from it.
- Read the verses again and then rewrite them in your own words using modern words / ideas.
- Write God a prayer about these verses. Ask him questions, tell him your concerns about this passage and / or express your thankfulness for the verses. Ask him what he wants you do about these verses, and write it here:

Read Mark 4:33-41

- Re-write the verses in your journal.
- Read these verses again and while reading it paint a picture in your mind of what is going on. Ask – who is there? What are they seeing? Feeling? Hearing? Saying? Tasting? Put all the senses in the picture.
- Place *yourself in the scene* – who are you? What are you needing / experiencing?
- What is the message or *good news* for you? What is God saying to you? What is he asking you to do or how is he asking you to live/ change?
- Give a name to the verses reflecting this message to you.
- Write a prayer in your journal (or below) about this verse.

Personal Commitment:

Write a commitment to apply what you learn from this time in your journal (or below), and share it with someone in your small group when the group is brought back together.