

Invest in your spiritual health: Silence and Solitude

LESSON AT A GLANCE

<p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <p>The NAC USA Midweek Experience Curriculum can be found on the NAC USA YouTube channel <i>and</i> in the NAC USA mobile app</p>	<p>I wonder...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What is the purpose of silence and solitude? <p>I believe...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear. <p>Materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ IGNITE Bible ➤ NAC USA Midweek Experience Curriculum – October 2018 – Session 4 ➤ Something to play a video (TV, computer, tablet, projector, etc.) <p>References:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bible: Psalm 46:10, Matthew 14
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PRE DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND STUDENT (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)

	<p>How often do you spend time apart from others in silence? This week we will be discussing the purpose of spending time in silence and solitude. Join us tomorrow for small group at _____.</p>
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POST DISCUSSION MESSAGE TO PARENTS (TO BE SENT VIA EMAIL OR TEXT)

<p>Facilitator Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please keep the main message intact, but feel free to add local information as necessary. • Consider sharing the video link above in the follow up message to parents. Encourage them to watch the video with their child and discuss what stuck out to them. 	<p>Dear Parents,</p> <p>This week the "I Wonder..." question was about the purpose of spending time in silence and solitude. The opening activity to this lesson was for the students to spend 5 minutes sitting in silence in a space that was separate from others. We would ask that you also do this activity. Sit in a room with no people in it, with complete silence, for 5 minutes. Do not do anything except sit there. After you do this, discuss with your student what it felt like to do this, for both you and them. Was it uncomfortable to do nothing for 5 minutes? Was it restful? What did you think about while sitting there? Consider incorporating intentional silence and solitude into your family's weekly rhythm.</p> <p>Your Youth Leaders</p>
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SUNDAY SERMON REFLECTIONS (up to 10 minutes)**Facilitator Notes:**

- Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week.

- What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday's sermon?
- What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn?
- So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?
- Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

HOOK (up to 10 minutes)**Facilitator Notes:**

- Allow 2-3 students to share their reflections. For larger groups, vary who shares from week to week.
- If space does not allow for each student to be in a separate room, have them go into different corners of the room you're in. It might be helpful to have them sit facing the wall so that they're not distracted by the others in the room.

- How are you and how are you feeling today?
- Who would like to share their point to ponder or call to action from last week?

Have each student go into a different room to spend time in silence and solitude for 5 full minutes. Have them leave their phones with you, so that they are not a distraction. It is important that the students do nothing during these 5 minutes, except sit there.

After the 5 minutes of silence and solitude, discuss the following questions with the students:

- How did this activity make you feel? Was it uncomfortable/awkward to sit in silence and solitude for that long? Was it restful?
- What did you think about during the 5 minutes? (Students do not have to share if the answer is too personal.)

SET THE STAGE (1 minute)**Facilitator Notes:**

- Preview the "I wonder" questions with the students.

I wonder...

- What is the purpose of silence and solitude?

LESSON (up to 25 minutes)**Facilitator Notes:**

Have the students skim chapter 14 of the Gospel of Matthew. How many times did Jesus go off by Himself to be alone and/or pray in this chapter? (2 times – Matthew 14:13, Matthew 14:23)

The point of this exercise is to show that Jesus often went off by Himself to pray – and these are only examples from one chapter of Matthew! (You can do a quick Google search to find many other examples throughout the Gospels.) If Jesus spent a lot of time in silence and solitude, these disciplines are worth taking a closer look at.

Start the session by reading these definitions if the students seem to not understand the terms “silence” and “solitude”:

- Solitude – to choose to be alone for a time and do nothing
- Silence – withdrawal from noise, words, and activities for a time, completes the action of spending time in solitude
- Silence and solitude are two separate spiritual disciplines, but they complement each other very nicely, and so the lesson focuses on them together.

- **Matthew 14:13:** When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself.

Student Question #1 What is the purpose of silence and solitude?

The purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear.

Ask the students: What do you think God wants us to see and hear when we practice silence and solitude? In other words, what does He want to happen during our silence and solitude?

- God wants us to notice what is true about ourselves as we come to Him in this time and space. Are we tired? Are we feeling joy? Are we angry about something?
- He wants us to allow these emotions that we’re feeling to be recognized. When we share these emotions with God, our relationship with Him deepens, and we gain strength from Him.
 - Reference Matthew 14:13 (and the previous verses for context) to see that Jesus goes into silence and solitude because of His grief over John the Baptist’s death and its implications.
- God wants us to recognize His presence and guidance in our silence and solitude. When we take time to do nothing, but sit and listen, we want to listen for Him. Maybe He has been trying to tell us something that we have been too busy or distracted to hear.
- God wants us to gain perspective. When we focus on Him, we begin to see Him and ourselves in the right way, and we notice His hand in our lives.

When we enter into silence and solitude, we are giving ourselves time to clear our minds. With this clarity, we give ourselves the ability to focus on God.

Student Question #2 When might it be helpful for us to spend time in silence and solitude?

Ask the students: Are there moments when silence and solitude might help us prepare for something?

- Before hearing God’s Word in the divine service, so that we can clear our minds to be filled with what the Spirit wants us to learn.
- Before experiencing Holy Communion, so that we can be focused on being in fellowship with God.
- Before repenting for our sins throughout the week, so that we have time and space to acknowledge our sins and confess them to God.
- Before going into or during times of practicing other spiritual disciplines (i.e. fasting, reading Scripture, worship, etc.), so that we can be focused on God and be open to His direction.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psalm 46:10: Be still, and know that I am God... • Consider asking whether or under what circumstances you would feel comfortable riding in a car or sitting in a room with someone without engaging in conversation or having any other noise or distraction (listening to music, etc.). Often people are ok with that when they are with people they are comfortable with or know well; often it is when we are with people that we don't know or aren't comfortable with that silence is awkward. What does that say about our relationship with God, if we want to avoid times of silence and solitude? 	<p><u>Student Question #3 Why is spending time in silence and solitude so hard?</u></p> <p>Spending time in silence and solitude means we have to let go of our grip on everything that is happening in our lives in that moment.</p> <p>Read the first line of Psalm 46:10. The Hebrew word for “be still” literally means to “let go of your grip.”</p> <p>Ask the students: What are you gripping in your life that you may need to let go of during your time in silence and solitude?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Personal preferences – Fulfilling our own desires (to play 20 more minutes of a video game, or to watch one more Netflix episode, or to hang out with a friend for another hour, etc.) is something that we want to do. But to create moments of silence and solitude, we have to be willing to put aside our own wants and desires for a certain amount of time. ➤ Control – In this society, there is always something that we are doing (homework, chores, piano lessons, part-time job, etc.). Perhaps we think that if we don’t get all of these things done, then we’ve failed or something won’t go the way it should. We need to trust God with our lives so that we can disconnect to spend time with Him in silence and solitude. ➤ Fear – Maybe the idea of spending time alone and in complete silence is intimidating. When there’s nothing going on around us, we are forced to focus on ourselves and on God. This could make us feel vulnerable, especially if we feel that our relationship with God isn’t as good as it should be. <p><u>Student Question #4 What can we do to help create moments of silence and solitude?</u></p> <p>Brainstorm with the students some things they can do to help promote spending time in silence and solitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Find a physical space to spend time in silence and solitude. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It might be helpful to pick a somewhat special place – a place set apart for God. If it’s just the student’s bedroom or another place they spend a lot of time in, they might be easily distracted during their moments of silence and solitude. ➤ Determine a time during the day when you will sit in silence and solitude, and for how long you will practice these disciplines. ➤ Sit in a comfortable position, so that you don’t have to move around a lot. ➤ Pray before you sit in silence and solitude, so your mind can already begin to calm down and disconnect from whatever activity you were just doing. ➤ Leave your phone in another room to prevent distraction or noise. ➤ If you plan to sit in silence and solitude in your home, tell your family ahead of time so they know not to disturb you. ➤ Accept what God offers during your silence and solitude. Maybe you will hear Him speaking to you, and maybe you won’t. Maybe you will learn something, and maybe the time you spent was just a way to slow down and rest for a while. Either way, trust that God is with you in those moments.
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WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME? (up to 10 minutes)

Facilitator Notes:

Wrap up the lesson with why silence and solitude is necessary for our spiritual health.

If there is time, consider showing the Midweek Experience video from October 2018 Session 3 on Fasting. Whether there is time in the circle of the discussion or not, consider including the video in the follow up message to the parents and encourage them to use the video as a conversation starter.

- [NAC USA Midweek Experience Curriculum – October 2018 – Session 4](#)

Close with the "I Wonder...." questions

- Ask a student to read an "I Wonder..." question, and invite another student to answer with an "I Believe..." statement or an "I Believe..." statement in their own words.
- As you review each question and answer, stop and check in with the group to be sure there are no misunderstandings or misconceptions.
- Remind the students that on their Confirmation day, they will or have already promised and committed to surrender themselves to God.

I wonder...

- What is the purpose of silence and solitude?

I believe...

- The purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear.

Point to Ponder....

- To practice solitude is to choose to be alone for a time and do nothing, to give up accomplishment. Silence completes solitude. Until we enter quietness, the world around us still commands our attention and distracts us.

A Call to Action....

Keep track of how much time you spend on your phone over the next week (you can keep track by writing down the times you go on your phone, or you can download an app that tracks your screen time each time you use your phone). After the week is over, consider how much time you spent using your phone. Was it more or less time than you expected? What other things could you do with the time that you typically spend on your phone? Now, over the next week, use 25% of the time you spend on your phone to sit in silence and solitude with God.

Weekly Reflections

What Bible verse was used for the basis of last Sunday's sermon?

What were some of the main takeaways? What did you learn?

So far this week, how have you applied what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

Going forward, how will you apply what you learned from the sermon last Sunday?

Point to Ponder...

Call to Action...

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I wonder...	I believe...
➤ What is the purpose of silence and solitude?	➤ The purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear.
References: Psalm 46:10, Matthew 14	

- 1. What is the purpose of silence and solitude? What does God want to happen during our silence and solitude?**

- 2. When might it be helpful for us to spend time in silence and solitude? Are there moments when silence and solitude might help us prepare for something?**

- 3. Why is spending time in silence and solitude so hard?**

- 4. What can we do to help create moments of silence and solitude?**

Point to Ponder: To practice solitude is to choose to be alone for a time and do nothing, to give up accomplishment. Silence completes solitude. Until we enter quietness, the world around us still commands our attention and distracts us.

Call to Action: Keep track of how much time you spend on your phone over the next week (you can keep track by writing down the times you go on your phone, or you can download an app that tracks your screen time each time you use your phone). After the week is over, consider how much time you spent using your phone. Was it more or less time than you expected? What other things could you do with the time that you typically spend on your phone? Now, over the next week, use 25% of the time you spend on your phone to sit in silence and solitude with God.