

Quiet Garden Movement | **Quiet25 prayer**

Silence....

In our looking, our seeing, our awareness.

Silence in our hearing and listening.

Silence in our searching, striving, and forbearance:

The stillness of God in all reasoning and understanding.

There may we find, refuge from sorrows and trials;

Strength for challenge of day and loneliness of night;

Protection in moments of danger;

Peace in the wonder of creation.

God, be the source of our strength, the solid rock on which we stand.

In you we place our whole being.

Trusting in your silence wherein your still small voice beckons.

AMEN

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The **Quiet Garden Movement** nurtures access to outdoor space for prayer and reflection in a variety of settings - as well as creating opportunities for people to experience silence, restfulness and contemplative practices.

Find out more about our work and how you can support it, as well as Quiet Gardens and events near you, at www.quietgarden.org

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QUIET25

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

A group journey
into silence

Quiet Garden
Movement

Welcome | A group journey into silence

The Quiet25 course takes you on a journey through a range of contemplative exercises and practices in the exploration of silence. It will introduce you to the experience of silence with others and in natural surroundings; exploring the physical, mental health and spiritual benefits of taking a regular quiet time in nature.



 As part of Quiet25, you are invited to spend a regular **Daily silent time** in contemplative prayer or meditation. We suggest dedicating the same time each day. First thing in the morning, midday, or last thing at night are naturally good times. After session 1, start with 10-minutes each day, and over the following sessions gradually increase the time to 25-minutes.

We recommend having a comfortable place to do this – somewhere you can sit upright, not slouched (a prayer stool can be useful but is not essential). A timer is also really useful, to free yourself from watching the clock. You might also find it useful to write your experience of these practices in a journal afterwards.

 During each session we will introduce a **Silent prayer practice**, which you can use as an ‘anchor’ during your daily practice. When you find your attention wandering during these times, gently return to the practice.

 At the end of each session we will also introduce a **Weekly task** – usually a question or two to think about the upcoming theme. You might find it helpful to note down your thoughts about this in a journal.

We hope you enjoy the Quiet25 journey...

Feedback... We welcome your feedback and experience of the Quiet25 sessions – visit: www.quietgarden.org/quiet25-feedback

Share your photographs & experience on social media with hashtag **#quiet25** – and follow us on twitter (**@quietgardens**) and facebook (**@quietgardentrust**)

Session 5 | Shared silence | Exploring communal silence

Silence can be a uniting force for – there is something about being in silence together that helps us be in silence, providing another ‘anchor’.

Daily silent time #5

Decide for yourself how you will continue your daily practice. What length of time will you continue with?

Silent prayer practice #5 Group

Sitting in silence together in contemplative prayer or meditation can be very helpful. You can try it as a family before a meal or the next time you meet up with others – simply invite everyone to sit silently together just for two minutes. Setting a timer can help people let go and not feel awkward.

Weekly task #5

This week decide how you are going to continue your journey into silence:

- How can you share group silence with your family and friends?
- Are there other ways you can bring ‘silence into your life’, such as switching off the internet, or TV, one evening a week?
- Is there a Quiet Garden local to you that you can visit regularly? Find your nearest at www.quietgarden.org. Or could you start a local Quiet Garden group that meets periodically for time in silence in a garden?

Make a plan for what might work for you and your household.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

John 14:27

“A being is free only when it can determine and limit its activity”

Karl Barth

“He who does not understand your silence, will probably not understand your words”

Elbert Hubbard

“While the discovery of the silent land is deeply personal, and no one can do it for us, it is at the same time deeply communal. Paradoxically no one discovers the solitude of inner silence by oneself.”

Martin Laird,
Into the Silent Land

Session 4 | **Finding silence** | Nurturing a silent space

Nurturing an actual space, in a particular place, where we spend our quiet times can be very helpful. Where might you create your space(s)?

Daily silent time #4 – 25-mins

Carry on your daily practice of silence - try 25-minutes each day.

Silent prayer practice #4 Object

Having something in your hand as you practice silent contemplative prayer can provide another ‘anchor’, helping to prevent the mind wandering.

Such prayer aids can take many forms, such as a **prayer rope** or **beads, holding cross, a smooth stone** or **any meaningful, tactile object**.

During this session you will have made or found a small object to use in this way.

Use your object in your *daily silent time* this week.

Weekly task #4

This week once again note down what experience you have with your daily practice and your reactions. Also, think about how you have found the time in silence as a group? Is the time you spend in silence by yourself different to when you spend time in silence as a group?

You might also want to spend time this week starting to think about how you intend to continue your journey with silence after the last session?

Session 1 | **Why silence?** | An introduction to silence

We are not talking in the literal sense of a complete absence of sound, but rather the condition or quality of being quiet or still. Silence is often used as a metaphor for inner stillness.

Daily silent time #1 – 10-minutes

 Spend 10-minutes in silence each day this week.

Silent prayer practice #1 - Breath

Sit with your back upright but not stiff, your feet touching the ground.

Let your weight distribute evenly on your chair/stool.

Hands softly at rest in your lap or by your sides.

Notice your breath, as you inhale and exhale.

Each time your mind wanders, gently bring it back to notice your breath.

Weekly task #1

This week note down what distracts you. During your silent practice what type of distractions get in your way? Is there a pattern?

“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

Mark 6:31

“I have shown you the power of silence, how thoroughly it heals and how fully pleasing it is to God.... Know that it is by silence that the saints grew, that it was because of silence that the power of God dwelt in them, because of silence that the mysteries of God were known to them.”¹

Desert Father Amononas

“Silence is multifaceted, a densely woven fabric of many different strands and threads.”²

Sara Maitland
Book of Silence

“Silence is where we speak something deeper than our words...”³

From the film, *In Pursuit of Silence* (2016)

“Silence is not the absence of sound, but the absence of self.”⁴

Anthony de Mello

Session 2 | Meeting silence | How we respond to silence

We all get distracted, and we all find barriers to silence around which to navigate. The strongest distraction is often in our own mind. The practices of stillness and awareness (or watchfulness) help us.

Daily silent time #2 – 15-mins

This week increase your daily silent time to 15-minutes.

Silent prayer practices #2 Word

There are many tools to help us focus, or anchor, our mind, for example our **breath**, **posture** and **movement**.

Another tool is **a word**. During this session you will have chosen your own word or phrase to use in this way.

Use your word in your *daily silent time*.

Weekly task #2

Continue to note down your experience of, and reactions to, your time in silence.

Also experiment with the different *silent prayer practices* in your *daily silent times* seeing which works best for you.

“Be still, and know that I am God...”

Psalm 46:10

“...the silence holds with its gloved hand the wild hawk of the mind...”

RS Thomas, from *The Untamed*

*“The inner chaos going on in our heads, like some wild cocktail party of which we find ourselves the embarrassed host...”*⁵

Martin Laird,
Into the Silent Land

*“The most deafening voice is our own. Desires, fears, anxieties and obsessive worries, a treadmill of thoughts, issuing from a constantly chattering mind”*⁶

David Tomlins,
Cistercian Abbot

Session 3 | Natural silence | Exploring silence and nature

Going outdoors is likely to increase the benefits of time in quiet. There are often less distractions than indoors, and outdoors can often be the place where we allow ourselves to be quiet.

Daily silent time #3 – 20-mins

Increase your daily time of silence to 20-minutes this week.

Silent prayer practice #3 Nature

In your silent time this week simply close your eyes for a moment, take three mindful breaths, in and out – then open your eyes and **look for something natural around you that attracts your eye**. Place your attention on that object, for example, a tree, a flower, a rock, leaf, shape or pattern in the landscape. Each time your attention wanders, bring it back to focus on your object.

You can also experiment with this exercise by focusing on a **natural sound** instead.

You might also want to find **a sit-spot** in your garden or as part of your daily routine. Using a sit-spot is a great way to observe the seasons. You could take a handful of seeds with you too to attract birds.

Weekly task #3

This week continue to note down what experience you have with your daily practice, and your reactions.

Also think about what type of space you find most helpful for silence?

“Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them...”

Psalm 111.2

“The power of God is present at all places, even in the tiniest leaf God is entirely and personally present in the wilderness, in the garden, and in the field.”

Martin Luther

“Climb the mountains and hear their good tidings... the winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy.”

John Muir

Footnotes: ¹ Quoted on pg 173 of Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding The Heart's True Home* (2008) Hodder & Stoughton | ² pg 187, *Book of Silence* by Sara Maitland (2009) | ³ from the film *In Pursuit of Silence* (2016) | ⁴ from *One Minute Wisdom* by Anthony de Mello (1985) | ⁵ pg 4, *Into the Silent Land* by Martin Laird (2006) | ⁶ David Tomlins quoted pg 46, *Lost in Wonder* by Esther De Waal (2003) | ⁷ quoted pg 125, *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor (2009) | ⁸ pg 5, *Into the Silent Land* by Martin Laird (2006)