

I Dare You

Module: Less Is More

Lesson 2: The Sound of Silence

Objectives:

Students will

- Recognize that our lives are filled with noise and distractions that may negatively affect our relationship with God
- Identify the spiritual discipline of silence as a method for combating this problem of noise and distraction in our spiritual life
- Experiment the discipline of silence
- Identify ways to include this discipline in our daily lives

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Several small pieces of bright, coloured paper or post-it notes for each student
- ☐ White board or chart paper and writing utensils
- ☐ Tape, sticky tack or push pins (something to post paper on a wall or board)

Minds On

Give students several small pieces of brightly coloured paper or post-it notes. Ask them to take a few minutes to themselves to think about all of the things in their lives that make noise (televisions, iPods, stereos, phones, etc.). Instruct them to write each “noisy” thing on a separate piece of paper (including each individual TV set, etc.). Once students have finished, invite them to stick their papers up where everyone can see them on a wall or board. Allow students to take a few minutes to read each others papers.

Ask students: Can anyone count how many pieces of paper are on the wall/board? Are you surprised by how many things we’ve identified as creating noise in our lives? Why or why not? Is there anything up there that you weren’t expecting? Explain. Are there other things that create noise that we might need to add to our wall/board? If so, what?

After allowing a few additional responses, ask students: Why do you think we surround ourselves with so much noise? Someone has suggested that all the noise in our lives actually makes it harder to hear God. Would you agree or disagree with that idea? Explain your thinking.

Action

Say something like: Today, we are going to begin an exploration of some specific disciplines of restraint (abstinence). I’m going to act out this discipline for you and I want you to guess what it is. Now, listen carefully. Stand silently for a few moments until someone guesses that the discipline is “silence.”

Ask: Why is silence often so hard to deal with? Can any of you remember the last time you spent some time in silence? If so, what was it like? If not, it’s pretty obvious to see that this is not a spiritual discipline that is practiced very much in our lives.

Have students form groups and ask each group to look up one or two of the following passages of Scripture (Matthew 14:6-13; Matthew 14:14-23; Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:38-44; Luke 5:12-16) and discuss the following questions together: What words might you use to describe the circumstances in the

passage(s) you read? When Jesus “got away” where did he go? Who was he getting away from? What did he do? Why do you think that Jesus regularly took time for silence and solitude?

After groups have completed this task ask them to share some of their responses with the larger group. You may choose to use a white board or chart paper to keep track of the responses.

Ask students: How might Jesus’ pattern of taking time out for silence and solitude be an example for us? When might be some obvious times to “get away” and “be quiet?” Why? What do you think might happen if you began to regularly take time out to practice the discipline of silence? What would be some of the benefits or results?

Once this task is completed, say something like: For the next few minutes we are going to try a little experiment in silence. I’d like you to find a spot nearby where you can go to be completely alone and as silent as possible. Try to focus your mind on God and feel free to pray about anything that comes to your mind but don’t talk to anybody. After a little while, I’ll call you all back and we’ll talk for a few minutes about what it was like. (You may want to do this activity outside if the weather permits. Day or night, the outdoor environment will be especially helpful for students who are unfamiliar with this discipline. You also may wish to allow students to leave their iPods, cell phones and watches in a basket before they go. This will help to keep them from tempting distractions. Also, consider praying before students leave, offering these next few minutes to God.)

Consolidate/Debrief

After about ten or fifteen minutes, invite students to come back together. Ask students: What was it like to have ten minutes of uninterrupted silence? Be sure to affirm students by acknowledging how difficult or awkward a long period of silence can seem. Ask: What kinds of things were you thinking about while you were being silent? Is there anyone who feels that they were able to connect better with God when they were silent and focusing on Him? If so, explain. (If not, affirm students that this is only a starting point in practicing the discipline of silence.)

If you have time and access to the DVD, you may want to consider watching a video from the Nooma series featuring Rob Bell entitled 05-Noise.

Say something like: Mother Teresa once said: “Silence leads to prayer. Prayer leads to faith. Faith leads to service. Service leads to peace.” Mother Teresa seems to be suggesting that the Christian journey often begins in silence. Maybe your Christian journey could benefit from the discipline of silence?

Say something like: Beginning to practice the discipline of silence doesn’t have to be hard. Let’s make a list of some of the moments that we do experience some silence or solitude in our lives that we could use to practice this discipline and focus our minds on God. On a white board or chart paper, record the responses. Some possibilities include: walking home from school, riding the bus, waiting for the church service to start, waiting for a ride, brushing your teeth....

Say something like: As you begin to get used to using these moments of silence to focus on God, you may be ready to take this discipline of silence to the next level. At home this week, take a few moments to ask yourself these questions (you may wish to have them printed up beforehand to distribute to students):

- Am I ever alone or do I always need someone around?
- Does my schedule, my time, my life look like that of a person who wants to hear God’s voice?
- Are there some things in my daily life I could change to eliminate some of the noise?

Close in prayer.