

A Quiet Place

There is not in the world a kind of life more sweet and delightful, than that of a continual conversation with God: those only can comprehend it who practice and experience it; yet I do not advise you to do it from that motive; it is not pleasure which we ought to seek in this exercise; but let us do it from a principle of love, and because God would have us.

Brother Lawrence

GOD DWELLS AS MUCH IN THE CACOPHONY OF THE CITY AS THE SYLVAN GLEN; His Spirit dwells as complete and rich in the metropolis as the country. The habit of praise may be practiced as much in the Gotham apartment as the monastic cave: the quiet, dew-sparkled garden is not a prerequisite.

But since God rarely shouts, we may find it easier to hear His voice in the quieter of the two places. For profitable communion with God consists more of *listening* than speaking. In it we are quick to speak His praise, but just as quick to seal our lips to hear His response.

Why is God so much more present in the sounds of nature—the call of the birds, the croaking of the frogs, the bleating snort of

the deer? Why do we hear God more in the environment of silence than in the environment of noise?

When a man-made sound happens to waft by from some distant source—say from a passing jet or helicopter—we normally don't find ourselves being drawn toward God by those sounds. When we step onto the busy city streets, dodging the noisy cars and belching delivery trucks, hear the scream of tires and the tiresome arguments of passing pedestrians, we're not lifted by them into the throne room of God.

If it is true that the quietude of nature draws us one step closer to the presence of God, it is equally true that the sounds manufactured by civilization more often insulate

us from Him. They represent for us society's bent away from God, and as such, work against the indwelling Spirit's bent toward God.

And beyond even the noisome tumult of our environment is our often frenetic behavior as we dwell within it. Neither—be it the noise or our frenzied behavior—make for an easy glide path toward the presence of God.

Come, behold the works of the Lord,
Who has made desolations in the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the
earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in
two;
He burns the chariot in the fire.
Be still, and know that I *am* God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!
The Lord of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah

Psalms 46:8-11 NKJV



I am reminded of the time we visited Chicago to attend our nephew's vocal recital. His apartment was located in the bowels of downtown Chicago. As if that were not bad enough, the bedroom assigned to Linda and me looked out over a busy street, across from which was an all-night liquor store. For ventilation during that hot and humid night, we were required to leave open the sliding door that faced the street. So, instead of sleeping, we spent most of that night being serenaded by the incessant, raucous nightlife of the streets of the Windy City. Having come from the sylvan quietude of our country acreage, we felt like we had been rudely transported to an alien world—an ill-behaved, bad-mannered, loud alien world.

It would have been almost impossible for me, in such an environment, to find God—much less commune with Him. Oh, I'm sure He was there. I'm sure His tender heart was very much concerned with the poor souls who spent that night leaning against the grimy face of that liquor store, swilling cheap booze from the neck of an anonymous paper bag. I am equally sure He was in the room with me, since His Spirit is ever my com-

panion. But in the rude cacophony of that environment, could I have listened for and heard His voice? Never.

The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many *people* coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.

Mark 6:30-32



Our quiet place may not always be a forested glen. We can commune with Him in the arid solitude of the desert; on the shoreline, with its pounding breakers masking the sounds of everything else; in the privacy of our car, while on the freeway; or in a quiet, inner room of the house. Wherever it may be, we must find and use often that personal place where it is easier for us to find God's holy presence. We must find and frequent that place where His voice is not masked by the invasive cacophony of the world.

The mistake many make, however, is to restrict their mutterings of praise to their official quiet place. Since they seldom have time to get there, they seldom make time to commune with the Lord. The "prayer closet" may be our best location of contact, but if we never open the door and go inside, it is as worthless as a glass phone booth in Times Square.

How much better it is to develop the habit of communing with Him wherever we are. How much better it is to find Him in every situation, to listen to Him along with the noise, rather than to wait until the noise has stopped. Because the noise never stops, we may find ourselves continually waiting—and instead of finding God, we will have found only another excuse to avoid Him.

