

Coffee with Phil. 43. Silence is Gold

Introduction.

Well, g'day and welcome to the podcast. Welcome to Coffee with Phil, episode 43, and today's title is Silence is Gold. And just want to say thanks for joining me today. Thanks, wherever you are, for dialling in, downloading and joining me on this journey of faith, with the good, the bad and the ugly. Today's gonna be interesting cause we're speaking about a topic that is challenging for me, and I've got four challenges that I'm facing, and I wonder if you are too.

But before that, I would just say don't forget to subscribe to the podcast. Please make sure you share it with at least one person. And I had someone the other day say to me they had binged a whole bunch of series sessions because they were in the car and they just kept playing them, and I thought it was quite funny that I would be in the car with them for that amount of time. So share the podcast, that's how we reach more people, and how we can expose people to what God is saying to us in this season, now, I'm not saying I'm the only one that's hearing from God, but certainly I like to listen to a wide range of people, so that I get perspective that's bigger than my reality, and that's what podcasts are all about, isn't it? Welcome to my world. Welcome to coffee with Phil. I hope you're enjoying a coffee somewhere today and taking time to build into your life.

Hey, I wanna say to you with regards to the concept of silence is gold. I want, those of you that know me really well will understand that this is such a challenge for me, because at any one time I figure I've got 471 things going on inside my head at once. My life is chaos, and I make it that way, and I am the problem, I am the problem there. Although kudos to me, this afternoon I had a meeting, and there was a new little group steering committee being formed for a project in our local town, and I had to decline the invitation to participate. I just said, look, I don't have capacity for that right now. So saying no is helping me reduce my 471 things down to 470.

But here's the problem with that. When I've got that much going on in my head it makes it really, really difficult to introduce into my world this concept of silence. But what I'm learning to appreciate is the concept of bringing silence into our world is gold. It's going to produce gold, and by gold I suppose I just mean benefits, some richness, some new experiences. I might become a better version of me if I learn to embrace this.

One of my favourite authors, a guy by the name of Dallas Willard, he says silence and solitude are the two most radical disciplines in the Christian life. He explains that solitude is the practice of being absent from people and things. Like our phones, or our family, or Netflix. Being absent from things in order that we would attend, or give our attention to God. Silence, says Dallas Willard is the practice of quieting every inner and outer voice to attend to God, to give our attention to him, our focus to him, our lives to him.

Another one of my favourite authors, a guy by the name of Henri Nouwen, he said this, without solitude it is almost impossible to live a spiritual life. A group of us at our church community have been going on a journey with regards to searching for emotional health, and I have quoted Peter Scazzero many times, with regards to how we might find emotional maturity in order that we would access a greater level of

spiritual maturity. And so, Peter Scazzero's book 'Emotionally Healthy Spirituality' is one I've referenced before, we'll put some links in the show notes for you. But in his chapter on silence and solitude, with regards to the rhythms of daily Office and Sabbath, Peter Scazzero comments about Elijah on the mountain top in 1 Kings 19, and he says, God finally revealed himself to Elijah, in a sound of sheer silence. And I get the contrast in this, because Pete is saying, if you know the story well, there was noise and there was chaos and there was this combat and there was, you know, fire falls from heaven, and a whole bunch of prophets of Baal get killed, and then the silence after the chaos for Elijah. And for you, and for me, is full of the presence of God. God did speak to Elijah out of the silence, and he wants to speak to us also.

And so today, I want to talk about silence as gold, and I wanna take you on a journey, I suppose, with what I'm struggling with, and perhaps you might learn something from that. But I would also say this, silence is interesting, because we kind of, you imagine the life of monks, and you imagine sitting on a hilltop in a brown robe, and you imagine crossing your legs and putting your arms in a certain posture and shutting your eyes to empty yourself. And certainly this is the practice of meditation, with regards to the way the Hindus do it, but this is certainly not what I'm talking about. The early church fathers, and those that sought God in a lifestyle of pursuing him just to be with him, and of course, Jesus being the ultimate example of that, I want to say this, this is not about emptying ourselves, being completely void of anything, that's not what the goal here is. Rather, the goal is to have a practice, or a discipline, or a lifestyle, where we choose to become still, in order to become connected to God. Now, perhaps I should say that we would become more aware of our connection with God as a result of our silence. So, understand that this practice of silence will be a challenge, but there is beauty in it, and gold in it, and I hope to entice you into it, and by me talking about it, I'm really just trying to enhance my own experience of this also.

The writer of the Book of Psalms, most of these are written by David, he says in Psalm 37 verse 7, Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him. And then flick the page a couple of goes, and/or swipe down, whatever, and you'll see in Psalm 46 verse 10, he writes, be still and know that I am God. Now this is an enticing invitation for me, to be still and know that I am God, says the Lord, because I would say that my motivation in this, and this is a huge challenge for me. But I'm saying my motivation in this is that the fruit of my silence will be a greater knowing of God, and I think that's gotta be my benefit. And so why am I pursuing this, in all the difficulty and the challenges I'm about to share with you, is the fruit of my silence will be a greater knowing of God, and by knowing you remember the Hebrew understanding of knowing God would be the experience of a face to face relationship, a sharing of the breath of God, and knowing him by experience through a relationship of intimacy. So, if I learn how to be still, sort out my chaos, get rid of 471 things that are at the front of my mind, and I learn to practice solitude and silence with God, then the benefit for me is I get to know and experience him in a greater way. And the greater my revelation of God, the greater my experience of the life that he's prepared for me, because I'm walking with him, step by step.

The Major Problems With Silence.

One of the things that I've got to be truly honest in though, and look, again, those who know me will be chuckling at this, is that I've got some major problems before I even approach silence. Because you know, I think we have this mindset of avoidance, and I know I do, sometimes I avoid the pain, or avoid the thing I know will help me, because of the pain it's going to cost me to get through to that. And so a

couple of things I think are major problems that I have with silence, and look, listen to this with the filter of saying could this also be me? Because some of you might experience the same. But I would say that I'm uncomfortable with the concept of silence because it forces me to be confronted with who I am revealed to be without noise. So maybe I just avoid the silence because I'm uncomfortable at the thought of being confronted with who I am revealed to be when there's no noise around me. And that's, you know, sometimes, some people reveal who they are when they open their mouth, and you're like ai yai yai. But, you know, sometimes in the silence, in this place where you're just, there's nothing but you, and you're face to face with God, and you suddenly understand.

You know, woe, woe is me, woe is me, said Isaiah, for I'm a man of unclean lips, and this is in Isaiah 6, because he's confronted with the glory and the majesty of who God is in that revelation he had, and the real of who he was, and I think silence does that for us, it forces us to the place of ugly where we are nothing but who we are in our sinful nature, and yet we're the only ones that dislike that, because the devil loves it, because he goes haha, you just finally worked out you're a loser, and you're a sinner, and there's no hope for you. So he loves that, when we're revealed in it. But God also loves it, because God is drawing us in by invitation to the place of judgement, which I say is not condemnation but a revelation of who we are and an acceptance that we need God to draw us out of that place into a place of holiness. So, the first problem I've got, and why I might try and avoid it is, I just get uncomfortable with who I get revealed to be.

The second major problem I have with silence is, when I'm silent, it's impossible to drown out the voice of the accuser. So, get this, the Bible tells us that the enemy of our soul, the devil, satan, stands before the throne of God, constantly accusing the brethren, the believers, day and night. So, he's the accuser, so his voice is the voice of accusation, it's condemnation, it's the lies and the false truths, and the self condemnation, that comes from him. There's the problem, when I stop talking, and I'm silent, and I sit there in silence, sometimes all I can hear is his voice. And quite frankly, I don't like it because if I tune in to it, I start listening to it, there's a chance that I might start accepting it, or at least receiving it, considering it. And then woe is me, because I get dragged down into a pile of poo, just because of what he is trying to achieve. He's trying to destroy me. He's trying to pull me down. He's trying to get me to doubt who God is. He's definitely trying to get me to doubt who I am before God. And so sometimes that silence highlights the voice of the accuser, and that shouldn't mean that we can't overcome it, but it certainly is a challenge on the journey to finding the gold that comes in our life from silence, and perhaps that might come to us a little bit soon.

The third thing that I think is one of the major problems of silence is God, the silence of its God to come near to me to speak. But what if I really don't want to hear what he has to say? Silence of its God to come near to me to speak to me. But what if I don't want to hear what he has to say? You know, sometimes, I don't know if you've ever had a season in your life where you know things were just a little bit out of balance, and you were perhaps tolerating things you shouldn't tolerate, maybe watching stuff on the TV or on the internet. Or maybe you had an offence, or a moment of unforgiveness, or some kind of fight with a friend, or a spouse, and you're like, man, I just need to resolve that, I need to apologise, I need to ask for forgiveness, offer forgiveness, I need to correct it, and you've got that niggle going on, and you know the niggle was the Holy Spirit, because you've had it before. And you're like man, if I just keep busy, it'll go away, it'll shut down, it'll be quiet, and I won't have to face what I don't want to face. But is that God's best for you? Is that what God wants for you? And I would say for me, I've learned that when I avoid those things, I avoid what God's got for me. So if I don't want to hear God, then I shouldn't

be silent, I just keep busy, I keep noisy, I keep moving, and quite frankly, the Lord is talking to me, I'm just not tuning into him.

The fourth and final major problem I have with silence, and this is what makes it so difficult for me, as my life. I have built my life, on busy chaos. So too embrace silence, to find gold in the connection with God that brings gold, it would require me to deconstruct who I am, and none of us like doing that. I mean, I don't like doing that. So I know that my strengths are also a weakness, I know that I have a capacity to do things that some people don't have, which means I embrace challenges that others don't embrace, which makes me feel awesome, and puts me in a whole pile of overwhelm. And so, because I know that's a problem I've got to try and deconstruct that. But the only way that I would be able to find a pathway to deconstruct that, is to get silent before God, and just allow him to transform me through relationship. And so sometimes I don't want that. Like man, I just, like I'm used to who I am. I'm just an old grumpy guy that is comfortable in this rut. And God's, like, come away to the quiet place, come away to the mountain top. Sit. Be still. Be still and know. Be still and wait patiently for God. Be still and know, and experience who he is. And so I'm having to face these problems, and if I say this, they're like obstacles on the pathway towards a greater experience of who God is through silence. And so, I've got to choose if I want to tear down those obstacles. I've got to get comfortable with being confronted with who I am. I've got to learn how to silence the voice of the accuser with peace and God's word, in order that I can be still, and be near God. I want to open my heart and my spirit, my soul, my emotions, to receive what God would say to me if he chooses to speak. And I have to be quite happy if the silence is silent, and God doesn't say anything. Because the goal of the silence is not just for God to speak, it's actually to spend time with him, and I have to be prepared to deconstruct my life. These are the problems I'm facing. And so what I wanted to do is transition to four challenges that I've decided to embrace. I'm saying, these are challenges I'm working on and I invite you to consider it.

Challenge #1.

So number one. Challenge number one for me is, I'm seeking to experience the trueness of silence, to wet my appetite for more. So I have changed my routine and I have forced into every single morning an opportunity to be silent, and what I'm finding is I'm really starting to enjoy it. And it's something that perhaps, I mean, I've had quiet times with what, no, let me say this way. I've had a discipline of a quiet time for a very, very long time, and I'd call it a quiet time, because that's a Christian name for it. But usually I'd be quite noisy, or I'd be reading, or I'd be studying, or writing out prayers in my journal, and that's not a quiet time, that's a time of encounter with God. But a quiet time, or a time of silence, is very, very different. It's when you purposely shut out everything, as Dallas Willard and Pete Sczerro were telling us earlier. To shut out everything, to attend to God. And so I'm trying to do that. And you know, so I've got this new experience, and this is the first time really I've spoken how would be about it, and then this week I'm meeting with this guy, we're having a business meeting and at the end of it was sort of saying see you later, catch up soon, and he says to me. Oh, did I tell you about my silent retreat I went on? I say, what? He goes, yeah, 10 days. He said, it was the most difficult thing I've ever done in my life. But he said, man it was the most amazing thing. And I was like, what? He goes, yeah, you know when people around me thought that I was going off to become a Hindu and worship the devil, or become, put idols in my life, but he says, man, I just experienced God in a new way, and I found out a little bit more about who I am, and my whole year has been different this year, because of what was given to me as a gift, the gold that I found in the silent retreat. And so I'm telling you that story, to

remind me of the benefits that could come to my life, if I stick with the challenges that I'm sharing with you. So challenge number one, for me, is experiencing the true bliss of silence, to wet my appetite for more of God.

Challenge #2.

Number two, challenge number two is, I'm trying to develop a daily discipline of finding space to be silent for lengths of time. Now this is challenging, because we all have patterns. We have routines. We have distractions. And you know, look, some days I have to get up early to go to a meeting, and I could choose to get up a lot earlier and have silence, or I can do it in the car. And I've actually spent quite a few years now driving with no noise, and I use that as a time to connect with God. But I'm trying to do it daily. And I just want to come back to another author, because I've got a quote written down here, I want to read to you. I've started reading this book called 'Praying like monks, living like Fools: An invitation to the wonder and mystery of prayer', and it's written by a pastor called Tyler Staton, he's out of the US, currently in Portland, and he writes this in his book, he says, many confuse stillness with waiting for revelation. Sometimes revelation does come and it's marvelous, but that's not the purpose of stillness. The purpose is consent. It is the daily practice of consenting to the work of God's spirit, which is deeper than understanding or words, it is how deep calls to deep, from our soul to his. Man is that not an enticing, that we would develop a daily discipline of finding space to be with God, as an act of consent to the work of God's spirit, which is deeper than words. Man, I hope that this is encouraging for you, cause as I'm sharing this I'm feeling stirred even more and more, to get into the silence and in the same, I think it's the same page, or, and certainly this book has like practice sessions at the end where you're really trying to apply it. He says, look, to start with, he says, set a timer on your phone or an old watch. But he says, do it for two minutes, and set the alarm so you don't keep opening up your eyes, but just wait till the alarm goes off, and then you can stop. But he says, then change it to four minutes, and then change it to six, and then change it to ten, and you will find, he says, I promise you, you will find that you just dive in deep and you really get to experience more of what God is wanting to reveal to you about who he is. So, challenge number two was about a daily discipline.

Challenge #3.

Challenge number three, man, this runs a bit deep, and I don't know how far down this rabbit hole I'm going to get, but here's the challenge. This is what I've written down for me. Stop restricting what you can receive by removing your expectations, filters, and false truth of who God is and what he wants. Ohh man, like you know if we stopped and thought about it, how many times do we actually put a limit on what God can do because we have the wrong mindset about what he actually wants for us. We think God, wants us to have a life of bliss and blessing, when in fact God says, if you will allow me to discipline you, and disciple you, you'll grow stronger and more fruitful. And we're like, oh man. And what if God, you know we want to have food on the vine, and God says, man I wanna prune that sucker, because you will be more fruitful if I prune you. And so we go into prayer time saying, God wants to bless me, and maybe God wants to tell us off. Or we go into a situation, and we hear something from God. Kathy and I were just challenging each other on this, this week, because you know, we're saying, well what we heard God say this. But what if we got our interpretation wrong, and we thought it meant one thing, and actually God meant it to mean something else. And that was a real interesting conversation, because the point is, we just stop and we go, God, what is it that you mean by that? And so I've got to stop restricting what I can receive by removing expectations, or removing filters, or removing a false truth of who God is

and what he wants. And the honest answer to how to do this is I've just got to slow down. I can't rush my encounter time with God. I can't rush it like an appointment. I can't watch the clock. You know, I've had times where I've been doing readings, or studying something, and I just get absolutely smashed by something I read, it could be a verse, or a part of a verse, or a statement someone makes. So I just have to stop, I just have to wait, and have to go, okay, this is one of those moments when God wants to say something, and I want to hear what he has to say. So, I think sometimes we can be the biggest, well, now let me say it personally, sometimes I think I can be the biggest obstacle to receiving what God's got for me.

Challenge #4.

So. The final challenge comes to me from a book I read about two or three years ago, and there's an author who I quite enjoy, his name is John Mark Comer. He has been a pastor, a church leader, he's currently on a rest season from what I understand listening to a recent podcast. John Mark Comer. He was seeking wisdom from one of his mentors, and I think, I haven't got the book in front of me, but I think it was Dallas Willard, I think. But let's just say I know for sure, John Mark Comer got given this advice. He says, what's the best thing I could do to do this journey well, and the advice he got was, you need to pursue the ruthless elimination of hurry in your life. And I know it was him that wrote this, because his book is titled, one of his books that I've got on my shelf is 'The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry', and I read that, and I was astounded at just the contrast between the life I was trying to live and the invitation into a place where you no longer allow hurry to rule you.

So, here's me being accountable and sharing something that I absolutely know I'm failing at, so every one of my friends that's listening to this is gonna text me, or come and chat with me, have a coffee with me, and help me, because I'm failing in the ruthless elimination of hurry. And so that's my challenge. And so, if I'm going to find the gold that comes from bringing silence into my world, not so much the practice of emptying myself, but the practice of becoming still, to become more aware of my connection with God, then I've got some challenges to face, but the benefits are worth it. The blessing is certainly at the end, well, it's not even at the end, the blessing comes as the journey progresses, because I'm already getting a whole bunch of different things going on in my life as a result of even pursuing this. And I would say that I am not a monk. I'm not meditating in silence for 30 minutes a day. But I'm certainly seeing a whole lot of benefit. So, I invite you into that journey. I don't know where you're at in your work with God. I don't know what your life looks like, but you can embrace silence and find the gold in it. You can challenge yourself with the challenges that I've put before you as my challenges. And, you know, we provide a transcript for the podcast, so you'll just get that by clicking on the link and you'll access it on the podcast, and you can go through these challenges and find them for yourself, choose which ones you want to apply, and seek out the greater knowing of God. Friends, that's my prayer for you, as it is for me. That the fruit of our silence would be a greater knowing of God. So, I say God bless you wherever you are. May you travel well. May you enjoy a really, really good coffee today, maybe with someone else, or maybe in silence as you spend time with God. Wherever you are, have an awesome time, and I look forward to catching up with you soon.