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## Silence

We live in a noisy world.

The alarm clock startles you from sleep. The television, radio, videos blare without end. Our cell phones ding and telephones ring, often with unwanted messages. Snowblowers and lawnmowers thunder.

Then there is traffic noise. You can't escape it by staying off the major highways. One study in Europe found that traffic noise is the second biggest environmental problem affecting health after air pollution. An earlier European report found that noise from rail and road transport is linked to 50,000 fatal heart attacks every year in Europe and 200,000 cases of cardio-vascular disease.



Sometimes we find it difficult to rest, be relaxed, fall asleep at night because of noise. Enter white noise. Its steady sounds can drown out disturbing noises and help you sleep better, it is said. Using noise to cancel out noise? Recent research seems to show that white noise has little beneficial effect on sleep.

Have you been in a loud room and wished it would be quiet? Trying to talk above the racket of the crowd doesn't work!

Noise. What do we do about it? What can we do since we can't turn off all the noise?

In contrast there is silence.

Studies tells us when silence in a conversation goes on for more than a few seconds, four seconds to be precise, people feel unsettled. It seems that silence is against our natural instincts, we want to fill in the blanks. And so, silence can be hard to learn.

Psalm 46 tells us, "Be still, and know that I am God" (10). The first words could be translated, "Stop!", "Let go!", "Relax!". The Psalm speaks of God as our refuge and defender. He rules over all people and nations. He is with us. Stop, be still, look to, rest in God. Psalm 37 instructs us, "Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act" (7). You see, *silence* here is more than the absence of noise.

How do we “rest in the LORD”? It is obvious that king David was not thinking about taking it easy, catching a quick nap or a good night’s sleep. The heading to Psalm 37 is “Security of those who trust in the LORD, and insecurity of the wicked.” Here we find a different kind of *noise*. The opening verse sets the scene, “Do not get upset because of evildoers, do not be envious of wrongdoers.” Rather, he writes in verse 3, “Trust in the LORD and do good; live in the land and cultivate faithfulness.”

Be silent, look to, focus on God, commit your way to Him (verse 6), and rest in Him. Rest in Him because He is the Sovereign, He is in control, He laughs at the wicked (verse 13) because He knows the judgment He has waiting for them.

Being silent before God is the starting place to develop resting rather than striving, silence rather than squawking. Sometimes when we read the Bible and pray, when we think about what God wants us to know and do, we can rush forward to fill in the blanks rather than waiting for God to give us insight and direction. Times of quiet after reading some verses of Scripture, moments of silence in prayer can be part of the discipline of resting in God.

Interruptions, surprises and disasters strike all of us. We can have rest, freedom from the noise that blares at us, stresses us. That comes as we have a pattern, a lifestyle of trusting and resting in God, going to God, of running to God. The chorus sings, “I run to Christ when chased by fear and find a refuge sure ... I run to Christ when worn by life and find my soul refreshed ... I run to Christ when stalked by sin and find a sure escape.”

A companion to this is to guard what we take in, what we choose to focus on. Remember the apostle Paul’s instruction,

“whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:8-9).

Ask God to help you grow in silence, in truly resting and relying on Him, His power and grace, His timing and will.

Pastor Lyle