



SILENCE AND SOLITUDE IN THE “I AM BUSY” LIFESTYLE OF A CHRISTIAN MINISTER

1. Introduction

This article deals with the need for the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude in the, “I am busy” lifestyle of Christians. The writer, sees it as an important yet seldom practiced discipline. Therefore, the writer sees that there is an urgency for research on the discipline of silence and solitude, its relevance and importance to the minister and his ministry. This article is addressed to the full-time ministers in the church, in para-church organisations and to every believer who desires to grow spiritually to hear God’s voice.

In an era of gadgets and speed, identified with the ‘I am busy,’ life style, men/women have forgotten to pause, to refresh themselves. In the last three decades, zealous Christians birthed various ministries, with a good intention to serve God and serve people. In the Indian ministerial scenario, in most of the ministries, the focus gradually shifted from God and people to numerous activities pertaining to ministerial activities. Thus, men and women in ministry and the laity are caught up in the ‘busyness of life’ in ministry. Rarely does one see the ministers and individuals engage in spiritual discipline of silence and solitude which is essential and relevant to believers and ministers for the spiritual growth. Donald Whitney propagates that, it is necessary to get far away from noises and people in order to hear God speak, otherwise one would never perceive His promptings in the course of everyday life or in worship service.¹Hearing God’s voice and God’s promptings is a necessary element of spiritual growth of an individual and society.

The writer has experienced burn out in ministry, as she failed to pause in the ‘busyness of ministerial activities.’ Though the writer faithfully read her Bible, fasted and prayed, she missed out the very crucial and important spiritual discipline of silence and solitude. In the Indian church context, one seldom hears or sees a full-time minister taking a sabbatical, a Refresher’s Course or observing the discipline of silence and solitude. In the theological field, professors do take the sabbatical, but it is mainly for writing a book or developing a

¹ Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 178.

course, but seldom engage in the discipline of silence and solitude. Nevertheless, evangelicals have shown a growing interest in spiritual formation in the last two decades,² there is a need for the practice of it.

In a fast-moving world, with various activities, it is necessary to hear God for direction, to make decisions, to be dedicated to the call of leading a holy life and to be a blessing to the community by observing the discipline of silence and solitude. But how does one define silence and solitude?

2. Definition

Donald Whitney defines solitude as the voluntarily and temporarily withdrawing to privacy for spiritual purposes.³ But, Richard Foster defines solitude as a state of mind and heart rather than primarily a place.⁴ While Dallas Willard propounds and reiterates Richard Foster, that it is a state of mind that needs to focus on the Lord irrespective of the place and sound.⁵ But, Plummer defines silence and solitude as complete quiet and complete aloneness for spiritual purposes⁶ reiterating Donald Whitney's emphasis on, for spiritual purposes.

The writer of this article defines silence as, a silent state of mind and heart, tuned to hear only one voice, the voice of God. Solitude may both be a solitary place and a state of mind. In other words, it is a state of mind and heart and/or a place conducive to hearing God's voice for spiritual purposes. But what was the origin of silence and solitude and how did the early Christians view it?

3. The Origin of Silence and Solitude

The origin of silence and solitude is related to Monasticism, where men and women gave up living in the community for a secluded place to concentrate on God and develop godly virtues. Anthony is said to be the "star of the desert," and the "father of monks," he appeared in Egypt around 280-290 AD.⁷ In the ancient east, the desert Fathers practiced monastic life (delete coma) in the fourth and fifth centuries,

Their concept of silence is evident by transliterating the Greek term, *hesychia*. It is not simply the absence of noise and external distractions, but is the inner peace and tranquillity that brought the monk into God's presence enabling him/her to voluntarily avoid temptation, vice and sin and cultivate the virtue and the habit of love and to rest the heart in God in

² Robert L Plummer, "Are the Spiritual Disciplines of 'Silence and Solitude' Really Biblical?," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 2, no. 1 (2009): 101.

³ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 176.

⁴ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1983), 96.

⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 162–63.

⁶ Plummer, "Are the Spiritual Disciplines of 'Silence and Solitude' Really Biblical?," 102.

⁷ Arthur Voobus, "The Origin of Monasticism in Mesopotamia," *Church History* 20, no. 4 (December 1951): 29, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3161875>.

continual prayer. The desert Fathers enjoyed intimacy with God by practicing *hesychia* along with other monastic disciplines.⁸

The focus of the desert fathers was on having intimacy with God. Christian ascetic literature, reveals that, ascetic withdrawals to desert hermitages was considered as an act of dying to the world.⁹ It is evident that in the early centuries, the discipline of silence and solitude was to have intimacy with God and dying to the world. Judith Adler suggests that “in reality, the “desert of the monks” was not removed from the world as the literature implies, but that the hermits sustained relationship with the settled communities.”¹⁰ Relationship between solitude and fellowship is evident.

According to Donald Whitney silence and solitude are complimentary disciplines to fellowship, though it seems paradoxical,¹¹ like the discipline of fasting and prayer. Dallas Willard quotes Henri Nouwen, “silence is the way to make solitude a reality.”¹² Some of the authors like Richard Foster, Thomas a Kempis, Thomas Merton and Dietrich Bonhoeffer speak of the relationship between inner solitude and inner silence.¹³ However, Plummer propagates that silence and solitude are not spiritual disciplines in themselves but are conditions that aid in the praxis of spiritual disciplines like prayer and biblical meditation¹⁴ Whether silence and solitude are considered as disciplines or conditions that aid in living out the spiritual discipline, they are always practiced together. Is there biblical meditation? Is, there a biblical basis for the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude?

4. Biblical Basis for the Discipline of Silence and Solitude

For a person to have a thorough knowledge of the scriptural understanding of silence and solitude, one needs to deal with the concepts and not confine to the truncated words as suggested by Robert Plummer.¹⁵ He relates the concept of Sabbath rest and festival holidays to silence and solitude, where one disembarks from the routine work to engage in worship for times of refreshment.¹⁶ In other words, Silence and Solitude is for spiritual purpose, to have intimacy with God as referred to earlier. The word *Selah* in the Old Testament suggests intervals for silence and solace. However, a consistent definition is an intentional “pause” or “break.”¹⁷ Silence and solitude do not just happen; it is a conscious effort that one has to make to pause from the busyness of life.

⁸ Mark DelCogliano, “Unselected Silence: An Essay,” *ARTS* 28, no. 2 (2017): 65–66, <https://www.societyarts.org/unelected-silence-an-essay.html>.

⁹ Judith Adler, “Cultivating Wilderness: Environmentalism and Legacies of Early Christian Asceticism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 1 (2006): 14, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3879327>.

¹⁰ Adler, 16.

¹¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 176.

¹² Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines Understanding How God Changes Lives*, 163.

¹³ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 98.

¹⁴ Plummer, “Are the Spiritual Disciplines of ‘Silence and Solitude’ Really Biblical?,” 110.

¹⁵ Plummer, 107.

¹⁶ Plummer, 107.

¹⁷ Clinton III Parker, “Pastoral Role Modelling as an Antecedent to Corporate Spirituality,” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 13, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 166–67, <https://documents.in/document/pastoral-role-m-ntecedent-to-corporate-spirituality-arl-jrlorgwp-content/uploads/201602parker-pastoral.html>.

Moses is one of the best examples who was transformed through years of virtual time of silence and solitude in the wilderness.¹⁸ Moses experienced and saw the glory of God, during the silence and solitude phase of his life. Another example is king Solomon the wisest man. He writes in Ecclesiastes 3:7 there is a time to keep silent and a time to speak.

The best example from the New Testament who followed the discipline of silence and solitude is Jesus. The gospel writers record instances when Jesus desired and went into silence and solitude. He taught His disciples to do the same. After His baptism, Jesus went into the wilderness. A place conducive for hearing the voice of God the Father. Jesus fasted for forty days and was in solitude. He derived strength to encounter the devil. Luke, one of the gospel writers' records that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the spirit as mentioned in Luke 4:14. At one time, Jesus went to a solitary place at day break. The people came, giving Him the honour and importance. But Jesus did not succumb to those temptations, for He knew the importance of disciplining Himself to be alone¹⁹ (Luke 4:42). Jesus spent the whole night in solitude in a hilly desert in prayer before selecting the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12).

After hearing the news of his cousin, John the Baptist's death, Jesus withdrew to a solitary place Matthew 14:13 but when the crowds followed Him, He healed the sick Matt 14:14 Jesus not only observed the discipline of silence and solitude but taught His disciples to follow suit (Mark 6:31). After feeding the five thousand, Jesus went up on a mountain side alone to pray in the night. And early in the morning Jesus walked on the waters (Matthew 14:25). Jesus sent His disciples away, so that he can be alone with the Father.²⁰ Jesus took three of his disciples on a high mountain, He was transfigured before them (Matthew 17:1-2). Jesus sought the quiet place in the Garden of Gethsemane to pray for the colossal task that lay before him, of his crucifixion and death. (Matt 26:36-46).

Jesus' life was characterised by bouts of silence and solitude. David Mathis clearly expresses the same as to why Jesus practiced so well what he preached about prayer and finding a "closet." (Closet is a regular spot that one can go to for prayer) Jesus did not have any inadequacies to make up for, and no doubts about his trueness, but because he desperately desired fellowship with his Father, he was often alone with the Father in prayer,²¹ as seen in the Matt. 14, 17, Mark 6, and many other passages. The above instances show that Jesus often sought for a solitary place to be alone with the Lord as Clinton III Parker reiterates it, "Jesus intentionally paused from the rigors of ministry to commune with God in solitude."²² Jesus drew strength from his solitary mission that is evident in the miracles that follow after his time with the Father.

¹⁸ Jay Adams, "Silence and Solitude For The Purpose of Godliness," in *Spiritual Disciplines for Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 175.

¹⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 177.

²⁰ Whitney, 177.

²¹ David C. Mathis, *Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus Through Spiritual Disciplines* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 102.

²² Parker, "Pastoral Role Modelling as an Antecedent to Corporate Spirituality," 166.

Paul is another person whose life was transformed by the discipline of silence and solitude as portrayed by Jay Adams.²³ Paul, immediately after the encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, prayed and fasted for three days (Acts 9:9, 11) He then went to the Arabian desert until he thought he was ready to return to Damascus, to Jerusalem and finally to his home town, portrays Dallas Willard.²⁴ Willard further suggests that the effectiveness of Paul as seen in the missionary journeys are, as a result of the use of fasting, solitude and prayer.²⁵ Solitude and fellowship are the two sides of the same coin of relationship with God. There is ample evidence in the scriptures to prove the basis for the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude, however, only few examples of Moses, Jesus and Paul are taken into consideration. A study of the benefits of the discipline of silence and solitude will help us see its relevance and importance to ministry.

5. Benefits and Challenges of the Discipline of Silence and Solitude

5.1 Benefits of the Discipline of Silence and Solitude

Richard Foster quotes Dietrich Bonhoeffer, reflecting on the importance of both fellowship and solitude, “each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair.”²⁶ Both fellowship and solitude are necessary elements of spiritual formation. Plummer, like Foster, quotes Bonhoeffer emphasising that solitude and fellowship, both are needed.²⁷ Solitude and silence are to be a temporary act, with a desire to get back into the community for fellowship. God is Trinity and desires fellowship. There are times when Christian life needs to temporarily withdraw into the discipline of silence and solitude,²⁸ hear God, be strengthened and motivated to spring back into fellowship with family, church and society.

There are people who observe silence and solitude for their own personal benefit and are not aware of the environment around them. One of the best examples is Chandrabhan Ragbir Sharma Mahabir Maharaj who observed the discipline of silence for eight years. One could not understand or know what type of communion he had with God, if any. The fact is his son Rabindranath R. Maharaj missed his father and did not have the joy of growing up with a father, though his father was alive.²⁹ He was alive but seemed dead to the family.

Christian discipline of silence and solitude is for a season and for a reason, for the benefit of others unlike Rabindranath’s father’s discipline of silence and solitude as seen above. Richard Foster quotes Teresa

²³ Adams, “Silence and Solitude For The Purpose of Godliness,” 175.

²⁴ Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines Understanding How God Changes Lives*, 103.

²⁵ Willard, 103.

²⁶ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline the Path to Spiritual Growth*, 85.

²⁷ Plummer, “Are the Spiritual Disciplines of ‘Silence and Solitude’ Really Biblical?,” 108–9.

²⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 175–76.

²⁹ Rabindranath R. Maharaj and Dave Hunt, *Death of a Guru* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1978), 13.

of Avila, “Settle yourself in solitude and you will come upon Him in yourself.”³⁰ In silence, there is a possibility to find God within oneself. In silence and solitude, one’s inward heart is fixed. It becomes safe to mingle with people, provided there was a prior time of solitude.³¹ The public life of a Christian is a mirror of his/her private life.

Henri Nouwen reiterates Dallas Willard and Ruth Halley, in stating that the real “work” of prayer is to become silent and listen to the voice that positively speaks about the self. Though it sounds as self-indulgent.³² These authors show the importance of solitude and silence to hear the voice of God. Often in prayer, people go to God with a list, the real prayer as Henri portrays is hearing the voice of God. He further states that, silence and solitude help an individual to hear the blessings of God and thereby are endowed with the power to bless others.³³ Blessing others becomes effectual when preceded by the discipline of silence and solitude.

Ruth Barton commenting on the busy lives of leaders, says, “we slide inexorably into a way of life that offers little or no opportunity for paying attention and then wonder why we are not hearing from God when we need God most.”³⁴ Describing the spiritual transformation of leaders, Ruth Barton uses two biblical metaphors - the formation of the embryo in the mother’s womb (Gal 4:19) and the metaphor of metamorphosis of the caterpillar into butterfly (Rom. 12:2).³⁵ The embryo and the cocoon stages are, important for the development. Transformation of the leader leads to transformation of the society. Thus, the silent period of the embryo and the cocoon are necessary.

There are many lonely souls waiting to hear a word of blessing. One of the remedies for loneliness is silence and solitude as Foster defines, loneliness as inner emptiness and solitude as inner fulfilment.³⁶ A person who is under the discipline of silence is a person who can say what needs to be said when it needs to be said.³⁷ It helps in keeping the tongue under control. The discipline of silence and solitude is a transformative discipline. One reason why the dual disciplines of silence and solitude are seen as thoroughly transforming is because it helps one see the other spiritual disciplines³⁸ like journaling, fasting, and being focused on God.

Dermot Power further acknowledges the essentiality of engagement with God for interiorization through a period of seclusion for the purpose of prayer, reflection, and self-giving.³⁹ Douglas Burton-Christie quotes Thomas Merton’s reflection of solitude as a kind of paradise, where one discovers his/her true identity.

³⁰Foster, *Celebration of Discipline the Path to Spiritual Growth*, 96.

³¹Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, ed. Harold C Gardiner, S. J., trans. Richard Whitford (Garden City, New York: Image Books Double Day, 1955), 56.

³² Henri J.M Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved Spiritual Living in a Secular World* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), 62.

³³ Nouwen, 63.

³⁴ Ruth Halley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 2008), 62.

³⁵ Barton, 16.

³⁶ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 96.

³⁷ Foster, 99.

³⁸ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 185.

³⁹ Parker, “Pastoral Role Modelling as an Antecedent to Corporate Spirituality,” 167.

It is a place, where the reconstituted person can re-imagine the meaning of community and also help in re-creating community.⁴⁰ Donald Whitney quotes Austin Phelps,

It has been said that no great work in literature or in science was ever wrought by a man who did not love solitude. We may lay it down as an elemental principle of religion, that no large growth in holiness was ever gained by one who did not take time to be often long alone with God.⁴¹

The discipline of silence and solitude are applicable to other fields like science and literature, besides spiritual formation for the benefit of the society. Plummer propagates that, just as the human body is replenished through sleep, food, water and air, God has designed humans in such a way that most, if not all, function better as persons after having experienced intermittent times of silence and solitude.⁴² As intermittent fasting benefits physical body, intermittent times of silence and solitude help the soul.

During the recent pandemic of corona virus, most of the people affected by it were confined to a room, were separated from the rest of the family or friends. At least for a period of 45 days the affected person had to be secluded. Some died from the fear of stigma, while a few others were on social media, but there was a large number of people who in their forced isolation turned to God. Many people made a personal relationship with God, while a few others renewed their relationship with God. The quarantine period was forced, but it did bring positive results of having an intimate relationship with God for many people, especially Christian ministers. It was a kind of experience of silence and solitude for many during the pandemic period.

5.2 Challenges of the Discipline of Silence and Solitude

The world is filled with noise. Most of the Millennials and Z generation work and study with the television, internet and music. They can work, in spite of the noise around them. Being silent is a challenge. Silence makes a person feel helpless because words are used to control and manage others, but in silence, God takes the control. This is possible only when one trusts God. Therefore, silence is intimately related to trust.⁴³ It is challenging in the initial stages of one's spiritual journey to allow God to take control. Most of the time we speak to adjust our image right. As James puts it, tongue is manipulative. One of the fruits of silence is the freedom to let our justification rest entirely with God.⁴⁴ It is a challenge and a challenging discipline.

Another challenge is, that it could, at times be intimidating, as it is an encounter with one's own weaknesses, hurt and humility. In silence, one is reminded of the deepest secrets that are hidden in the heart, even from the self. The fear of acknowledging this would mean humiliation and nothing less than annihilation of one's very being.⁴⁵ The intimidation of coming face to face with one's own deep secret is challenging, but

⁴⁰ Douglas E. Christie, "The Work of Loneliness: Solitude, Emptiness, and Compassion," *Anglican Theological Review* 88, no. 1 (2006): 26.

⁴¹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 186.

⁴² Plummer, "Are the Spiritual Disciplines of 'Silence and Solitude' Really Biblical?," 111.

⁴³ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 100–101.

⁴⁴ Foster, 101.

⁴⁵ DelCogliano, "Unselected Silence: An Essay," 62.

the very purpose of the discipline is to be renewed, to be empowered, to hear God's voice and have intimacy with God without being condemned.

Burton-Christie quotes Merton's description of authentic solitude as, a solitude not based on fear or a desire to flee from the challenges of relationship, but rather it should arise from a desire to confront oneself honestly, to be recreated in the image of God and to arrive at a deeper sense of how to live in authentic relationship with others.⁴⁶ This is very true, for solitude is primarily to focus on God; to hear Him, to be renewed and to be a blessing to the community. One cannot give what one does not have.

A study of the practical steps of the discipline of silence and solitude will further help see more advantages as one incorporates them in their life.

6. Practical Steps for the Discipline of Silence and Solitude

There are various models for observing silence and solitude. Ruth Haley Burton endorses, Thomas Merton's model of meditating on Scriptures, prayer of petition, followed by repeating words to hone into special meditation.⁴⁷ The other model is to directly focus on God, without prior prayer or meditation. This is seen as higher, purer, or superior to meditation and prayer in aspects like praise, confession and intercession.⁴⁸ The writer of the article has picked only one style of experiencing the discipline of silence and solitude, because she was personally blessed by this model. It is the model portrayed by Richard Foster, with six steps into solitude which are as follows:

- To make the best use of the "little solitudes" that are available during the day.
- To develop a "quiet place" or a special place within one's reach, the writer of this article has a special place near her bed where she feels the special presence of God.
- To practice a day-of- silence to experience the feelings of helplessness and total dependence on God. The writer of the article had to make an important decision of resigning her job to obey the call of God. She needed confirmation from the Lord. She spent a day alone with the Lord, with words and groaning, feeling helpless and totally depending on God for the answer. The Lord spoke to her in an audible voice referring to a scripture portion that confirmed her call very clearly.
- The fourth step is to withdraw to a place four times a year to practice the Discipline of silence and solitude. The writer of the article desires to incorporate taking four times a year off to silence and solitude.
- Richard Foster proposes the necessity of journal writing as the fifth step.
- And the sixth step is to take a take an annual retreat with solitude in mind.⁴⁹ Foster's practical steps for the discipline of silence and solitude is very practical and necessary.

⁴⁶ Christie, "The Work of Loneliness: Solitude, Emptiness, and Compassion," 43–44.

⁴⁷ James E. Rosscup, "Invitation to Solitude and Silence: Experiencing God's Transforming Presence," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 16, no. 2 (September 2005): 325.

⁴⁸ Rosscup, 325–26.

⁴⁹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 106–8.

Since silence and solitude are a state of mind, it may or may not require a solitary place. However, it needs a physical action. Thomas a Kempis urges the readers to “seek for a convenient time for their conscience’s sake to, often reflect on the blessings of God.”⁵⁰ Solitude has come to become a necessary ingredient of every individual in today’s fast changing lifestyle and fast-moving world. Since, silence and solitude are action oriented and not merely state of mind,⁵¹ it is important to take action. The writer of the article believes that each individual needs to make a conscious effort to be silent and to tarry to a place of solitude to be able to see and hear God. Once this discipline is followed regularly, then it will become a part of daily life and will reflect in one’s life and ministry.

7. Its Relevance and Importance to Ministry

It is relevant and important because Jesus observed it. In order to be like Jesus, and find spiritual strength one needs to follow the discipline of silence and solitude.⁵² The discipline of silence and solitude leads to transformation. There is something both appealing and transforming about silence and solitude.⁵³ Therefore, the discipline of silence and solitude is relevant and important for it not only transforms individuals, but communities. This is the crux of any ministry. Jesus constantly looked for a solitary place to be alone with the Father. In a world that is lot more fast paced with much more noise and distraction, and the corporate style of functioning of ministries, the need of silence and solitude is inevitable. This, then is the urgent call for men and women today who are busy and seldom take time to be alone with God. Conscious effort to cultivate the discipline of silence and solitude is an urgent need of the hour.

Os Guinness, uses the phrase “You deserve a break today,” while talking of the call of God. Call of God helps one to be single-minded and focused. But there is the pressure of modern world choices that threaten the concentration and lead a person to burn out.⁵⁴ Though the word ‘solitude’ is not used, the concept of silence and solitude is obvious. God, took rest on the seventh day of creation. He instituted rest for the people, for animals and fields. So that the body is refreshed, with better vigour and better produce from the land. “Silence is a curious resource in a world that seems to be growing noisier by the day.”⁵⁵ Thus, there is a need for silence. The writer of the article has personally taken a break to experience God in silence and solitude, and in the daily affairs of life.

She took time to be cleansed, to be recharged and spring back with more zeal and love for God and for His people. The discipline of silence and solitude are so transfiguring as they provide time to think about life and to listen to God⁵⁶ as the writer has and is experiencing it. “Silence and solitude are not twentieth-

⁵⁰ Thoma a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, ed. Harold C. Gardiner, trans. Richard Whitford (New York: Image Books Double Day, 1955), 55.

⁵¹ Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 105.

⁵² Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 177.

⁵³ Whitney, 175.

⁵⁴ Os Guinness, *The Call Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 168.

⁵⁵ Justin Langille, “There Is Nothing Between God and You: Awakening to the Wisdom of Contemplative Silence,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 50, no. 3 (2007): 374.

⁵⁶ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 185–86.

century words”⁵⁷ they are a part of the twenty-first century spiritual formation disciplines that are needed now than ever before.

I quote the example of three great people who saw the relevance and importance of silence and solitude to life and ministry. The story of Anthony of Egypt as told to Athanasius, quoted by Douglas Burton-Christie, Anthony after many years of solitude emerges to embrace the human community and the community experiences him as powerful healing presence.⁵⁸ This shows how important it is for men and women to experience solitude in order to minister more effectively in the community.

Hudson Taylor, one of the great missionaries, whose commitment and determination to serve the Lord influenced many lives. Hudson Taylor, was a young missionary to China. In 1865, while in England to continue some medical studies, he struggled with a decision. He resorted to silence and solitude and heard the voice of God, and a door opened for the China Inland Mission.⁵⁹

Shuji Moriichi, a chaplain learnt the art of silence. He quotes Henry Nouwen who warns that individual pastoral care is not limited to the application of any skill or technique, for it is the continuing search for God in the lives of the people, one serves.⁶⁰ The relevance and importance of the discipline of silence and solitude to ministry is apparent as reflected in the article.

8. Conclusion

The spirituality of a leader or in this case a Christian minister is dependent on intentional times of solitude and *Selah* for interaction with the Divine⁶¹ to become an effective leader to lead the people. Solitude is the state of mind that can be maintained at all times for it is a deep inner silence in the midst of noise and confusion.⁶² Inward solitude manifests outwardly. There will be freedom to be alone to hear God better and not so much to be away from the people.⁶³ Solitude is for a season. Silence is a curious resource in a world that seems to be growing noisier by the day⁶⁴ which the Christian community needs to adhere to. Moriichi, proposes that there is a need for the development of “theology of silence” and to explore, “the ministry of silence”⁶⁵ which is the need of the hour.

Based on the above study, the biblical basis, viewing the benefits, having a fair knowledge of the practical steps and understanding its relevance and importance to ministry, the writer desires that men and women would not only appreciate silence and solitude but practice it. Practicing the discipline of silence and solitude will enhance one’s relationship with the Lord and will help in the transformation of the community. To the ministers in the Indian church scenario, the writer desires that each minister will recognize the need of

⁵⁷ Whitney, 176.

⁵⁸ Christie, “The Work of Loneliness: Solitude, Emptiness, and Compassion,” 31.

⁵⁹ Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 185.

⁶⁰ Shuji Moriichi, “Re-Discovery of Silence in Pastoral Care,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counselling* 63, no. 1–2 (2009): 2.

⁶¹ Parker, “Pastoral Role Modelling as an Antecedent to Corporate Spirituality,” 167.

⁶² Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 96.

⁶³ Foster, 97.

⁶⁴ Langille, “There Is Nothing Between God and You: Awakening to the Wisdom of Contemplative Silence,” 374.

⁶⁵ Moriichi, “Re-Discovery of Silence in Pastoral Care,” 6.

the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude, its relevance and importance to the individual and to ministry. That they will strategically plan to set aside time from the 'I am busy' lifestyle engrossed faithfully in ministerial activities. Doing so, will help one, to be renewed, strengthened and empowered to serve more effectively for the cause of the kingdom of the Lord. Its implications are relevant to Christians and Christian ministers globally.

Jesus is the model of the minister and the ministry. The solitudes Jesus took were to hear God on an ongoing basis for the ongoing ministry as is evidenced when he says, in Jn.5:19-20. ¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed.

