

An abridged and more spiritually-extemporized form of this segment was presented to the congregation of the Creative Life Church in Hot Springs, AR, on Sunday, March 14, 2010. Your comments are welcome; please feel free to contact me through my website: www.creationspirit.net. (Previous commentaries about The Inward Way can be found in the “Free Monthly Presentations on The Inward Way” section on the left-hand side of the same website.) Succeeding presentations regarding other aspects of The Inward Way will be made on the second Sunday of each month at the 10:30 AM service of the Creative Life Church, 229 Bayard Street, Hot Springs, AR. The public is invited. In addition, meetings of The Aristotle Group, formed for purposes of metaphysical exchange, are held on the second Saturday of each month from 10AM-noon at the same location. These meetings and services are open to the public and participation is encouraged.

SHHHH!

What an unusual title for a talk or presentation: Shhhh! Whenever I hear another communicate this expression, it usually means that someone wants everyone around them to be silent—and probably that they’re being distracted from being silent, themselves. Not a bad idea, given how many distractions we have around us these days—and how many of us are oblivious to how unaware we are that we’re even being distracted. We’re so hooked into distraction that we rarely consider that when distracted we’re mistranslating our purpose in Life.

Over the past months, we’ve been looking at what it means to fulfill our lives spiritually—gaining a sense of purpose, direction and order by connecting with and abiding only our divine Source inwardly. I’d like to focus on listening from a spiritual point of view for a few moments, just to “lock in” on silence as a very important aspect of living spiritually from moment to moment. I’ll start with a response from someone who speaks about being silent so another can hear their own inner voice speaking. Then I’ll shift slightly by sharing a connection between silence and solitude, taken from yet another sterling source. I’ll follow that with a philosophical approach or two, and then share a very practical suggestion by one of our own from this congregation. And, of course, I’ll sprinkle all this with a bit of what comes up for me. Eventually, I suspect, there will be a connection with silence for all of us before we’re through. So, let’s begin and see where listening carefully and being silent takes us.

First, a piece on listening, by Robert Hatcher:

“When I ask you to listen to me
and you start giving advice
you have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me
and you begin to tell me I shouldn’t feel that way,
you are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me
and you feel you have to do something to solve my problem,
you have failed me, strange as that may seem.

Listen! All I asked, was that you listen.
Not talk or do—just hear me.
Advice is cheap—ten cents will get you both Dear Abby and
Billy Graham in the same newspaper.
And I can do that for myself; I am not helpless.
Maybe discouraged and faltering, but not helpless.

When you do something for me that I can and need to do for myself,
you contribute to my fear and weakness.
But, when you accept as a simple fact that I do feel and what I feel,
no matter how irrational, then I can quit trying to convince you and
can get about the business of understanding what's behind this
irrational feeling.
And when that's clear, the answers are obvious and I don't need advice.
Irrational feelings make sense when we understand what's behind them.

Perhaps that's why prayer works, sometimes, for some people
because God is mute, and he doesn't give advice or try to fix things.
He just listens and let's you work it out for yourself.

So, please listen and just hear me. And, if you want to talk,
wait a minute for your turn; and I'll listen to you."

Surely, there's a great deal of practical good in this piece of wisdom. The most practical, to our sense of spiritual discernment, is that God—Christ consciousness, the still, small voice—is our highest self that speaks as we listen, working out Truth from the inward Source. Indeed, there is no outer source to provide answers for us; there's only Truth waiting to become aware. It's our awareness of Truth, then, that works out our concerns and issues for us. It's not going to someone else or even some abstract God that gives us answers—it's silencing our beliefs and opinions that allows of us to hear our own divine guidance for what we need.

Thomas Keating, the contemplative monk, tells us that, "Silence is the language God speaks; all else is but a bad mistranslation." Perhaps this is what is meant by another soulful quote, this time from Anam Cara, by John O'Donohue:

"Solitude is one of the most precious things in the human spirit. It is different from loneliness. Solitude can be a homecoming to your own deepest belonging. In each person, there is a point of absolute non-connection with everything else and with everyone. This is fascinating and frightening. It means that we cannot continue to seek outside ourselves for the things we need from within. The blessings for which we hunger are not to be found in other places or people.

These gifts can only be given to you by yourself. They are at home at the hearth of your soul."

Do these two lovely bits of wisdom speak to silence? Are they referring to some place within us we call silence or solitude? That's up for you to decide. For me, given the context of our continuing commitment to discern spiritual meaning—to listen while deeper meaning seeks our awareness—I'd posit a slightly different "take" on silence. Of course, you'd expect nothing less from me by this time.

If we are to clearly discern what living spiritually means for us—bringing order to our lives by connecting with and abiding our divine inheritance, the still, small voice of Christ consciousness that guides, our inherent divine spirit called One—we have only this imperative before us: to silence the beliefs and opinions that have become ours by adhering to the voice of ego consciousness, and to listen thus while deeper meaning seeks our awareness. Silence in the context of living spiritually then becomes a verb rather than residing as a noun, some place we are to go: we must silence our own distractions in order to hear our own highest good being spoken to us—by us, through our own, inherent divine voice. Either way, our perspective of life determines the outcome, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Should we continue to demonstrate our lives through the perceptions of ego consciousness, it is those views that will manifest in our everyday journeys. Likewise, should we silence the callings of ego consciousness and listen only to the inward Source for guidance, it is those images that will manifest in each moment. Indeed, either way, what we demonstrate out into the Universe is in the exact image and likeness of god—or God—whichever you decide is Truth for you.

From my point of view, the early twentieth-century Swiss philosopher Max Picard says it among the best. While discussing the element of distraction and its impact on our lives, Picard says that when we speak and listen out of the myriad beliefs, opinions and activities that distract us from our Truth, we are like noise speaking to noise. After all, it is witness to living largely through the extensive metaphors of outer distraction. However, when we have silenced our beliefs and opinions—and are thus tuned in to speaking and hearing only Truth found inward—it is more like God speaking with God.

This turns us toward the admonition of the Master Metaphysician, Jesus, who, when taken as he intended—spiritually, metaphorically—told us to go within, where there, and only there, we would hear the voice of God. We have all heard, I am sure: "Be still and know I am God." This is not to suggest necessarily that we sit and meditate—although such a practice can be helpful in building our capacity to listen spiritually—but that we become more aware of and then silence our all too vague awareness of ego conscious commitment, the endless array of spiritual mistranslations, and be or rest only with the Truth of our Being.

A member of our congregation shared this with me a few weeks ago, a quote from E. B. White:

"I arise in the morning

torn between a desire to save the world,
and a desire to savor the world.
That makes it hard to plan the day.”

Merrilee then goes on to picture this remedy: “Live in the spontaneous moment peacefully, with your creative mind open to receive joyous revelations.”

As you would guess, I hear Merrilee calling us to silence the distractions of ego consciousness so we can hear in each moment of now joyous Truths being whispered to our heart of hearts.

So let’s do practice this admonition: Shhhh! As we know, it takes practice to establish new habits of Being. No less than Miles Davis says it this way: “Sometimes you have to play a long time to play like yourself.” Let’s take his advice, then, and practice “shhhhing” whenever we find ourselves straying from inner Truth by acting from our vast storehouse of beliefs and opinions—the treasures of our alliance with ego consciousness. (Those treasures Jesus admonished us to give up in order to follow The Inward Way.) “Oh, Pat and I are separate, so I can blame her for this: Shhhh!” “Oh, I need to win this conversation: Shhhh!” “Oh, I’m being judgmental towards myself for being overweight: Shhhh!” Indeed, Shhhh! “We’re One—and I love you—and like a child I want only to express my heart by playing silently with you!”