Dear Lexie,

I am at home today in silence and solitude (savoring every minute!), even though I'm under the weather with a bug that's been going around our congregation. Silence and solitude have not always been my choice.

Several years ago, I began to recognize an inner chaos in my soul that was more disconcerting than anything going on in my busy external life. No matter how much I prayed, read my Bible, and listened to others, I could not truly calm the internal roar created by questions with no simple answers, performance-oriented drivenness, and emotions that were sometimes easier to hide than to fully express.

...(read more below)

I sought out a spiritual director, someone well versed in the care and feeding of the soul. We shared (she listened, I talked) about many thing swirling in my life: family, career, graduate school. Eventually this very wise woman said, "Rebecca, you are like a jar of river water all shaken up. What you need is stillness and silence so that the sediment can settle and the water can become clear."

I knew intuitively that I was exactly what my spiritual advisor had described. The picture of the still water was compelling enough to get me to accept the invitation to move beyond my obsession with words and constant activity. But what sounded like a lovely idea was actually...
excruating for someone who'd moved so fast for so long.

Despite the difficulty, I stuck with it. The most amazing things began to happen! Daily practices of silence and solitude offered abundant hope of peace, clarity and deeper certainty. A quiet center began to form in me, a place of stillness in which I saw my life more clearly and began to experience God's love on a much deeper level.

Scripture emphasizes the importance of silence in our lives. The psalmist reminds us to silently contemplate the God we serve: "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth" (46:10). Jeremiah admonished those in the midst of trials to sit quietly in silence: "It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord . . . Let [us] sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on [us]" (Lam. 3:26, 28). Jesus regularly retreated into solitude to pray (Mk. 1:35, Lk. 5:16). "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me" (Jn. 8:28).

As faithful disciples, the importance of this exercise in our lives is clear. However, even in the church, it's become so difficult to give up our dependence on noise and words to distract us from what is really going on inside. Our reliance on words, sometimes even in our praying, is often just another way we strive to maintain control and set our agenda rather than opening up to what God wants to give.

Prayer without words is not so much about expressing our dependence on God, but rather experiencing it. This was Elijah's experience in 1 Kings 19:4 as he literally came to the end of himself: "Take my life." He was willing to relinquish control and accept what God had in store for him with greater freedom-His loving, ministering, calming presence.

My friend, God is waiting to give us more than we can imagine! May we persevere in silence and solitude, resisting the urge to judge our experience in openness before Him, to receive the fullness of His loving presence. The sediment will settle, the water will clear, and we will see in ways that we have never seen before.

Rebecca Brillhart
Pastor for Discipleship
March 24
Pr. Rebecca Brillhart

Worship Services every Saturday:
First Service - 8:45am
Sabbath School - 10:00am
Sabbath Celebration - 11:15am

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May God continue to richly bless you!

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