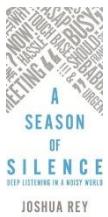


Week 4 (chapters 19-24)



Small group prompt sheet

Material covered this week

This week we tried do the undoable.

We saw last week how paradoxical silent prayer is. If you are doing silent prayer you are not doing it. We have to let go, but the active purposeful letting go that we know how to do is really a form of taking hold. The more we try to be silent, the more noise there is.

This week we tried a few kinds of doing that are more likely than other kinds of doing to let us slide slowly and gracefully into simple being. First we tried the body scan: noticing and being aware of the whole body is quite a good way to approach simply being here now. Then we thought of some simple words, probably scripture, which we could become so familiar with that they might come to us unbidden and call us back to silence.

Then we looked at the experience of silent listening from different angles. The mysterious moments of balance after a prolonged period of non-silent effort, when we may, just, find ourselves effortlessly in silence. The value of going over the same ground again and again so that it becomes instinctual. The need to wait out with loving patience any distractions that arise.

Questions for reflection

- What if anything has changed in your sense of your body, and the body's integration with the whole person, since we learnt to sit and breathe?
- What do you find helps you to be grounded and still?
- Are there words or phrases so familiar to you that they come to mind without conscious thought, and are they good words?
- How long can you pause your thoughts before they start again?
- What simple, practical things can you do that will make it easier for you to enter into silent prayer?
- Can you think of other things that you can't get by chasing or grasping them?

Further prompts for discussion

- Have you had any moments in which you have not been striving to be here now but have actually been here, now?
- What is it like?
- Can one actually say what it is like? Or does saying what it's like stop it being what it is?
- How are you liking the body scan – are you able to be in it, or does it feel like a distraction?

Before silence: “pre-flight checks”

- All the usual things: sit, breathe, listen, here, now
- This time let's do a body scan
- Work upward from feet to scalp
- Pay attention to each segment in turn whilst you breathe in and out a few times
- Just be aware of what is there – don't judge or assess
- At the end, listen and wait

Time	Activity / Notes
7.45	Arrivals
8.00	Opening prayer
8.05	Check in
8.15	Reading
8.45	Reflecting on silence
9.00	Anything else?
9.10	Silence and concluding prayer