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## *Pastoral Reflections—October 2020*

*Dear Churches,*

In a recent sermon I talked about the importance of taking time to be silent and listen to the Spirit during our times of prayer. In a devotional I often use, Common Prayer by Shane Claiborne, for September he talks about Contemplative Prayer. Contemplative Prayer as Claiborne says, “is not just about activity and speaking but also about listening and resting in God. Many of us have grown up thinking of prayer as a checklist of requests to God...as one kid said, ‘I’m heading off to pray – does anyone need anything?’”

Like I said, I know it can feel awkward or unproductive to spend time just being silent and listening to God in prayer, but I think it’s a good practice and a good challenge for Christians in this busy, uncertain, and divided world. Shane says, “Prayer is less about trying to get God to do something we want God to do and more about getting ourselves to do what God wants us to do and to become who God wants us to become.” I forget who said it, but in a similar train of thought, I remember the quote, “it’s better to have a heart without words in prayer than words without a heart.”

A good way to enter a time of practicing being silent and listening to God in prayer is to take one verse or story and focus on that, perhaps repeating one word or phrase about God that sticks out to you, and let that repetition wash away other competing worries or ideas in your head until you can be silent and simply be with God. For example, repeat the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc. and let that lead you to be silent and rest in God’s presence. I’m not saying God will audibly speak to you—I haven’t experienced that myself—but I believe God does speak to us in different ways if we allow God that time and space. Perhaps God will put a person or situation in your mind where God wants you to be a part of answering someone else’s prayer, or perhaps God will lead you to forgive someone, or perhaps God will simply use that time of silence to teach you how to trust Him and not put so much pressure on yourself.

So this is my encouragement and challenge for us these next few weeks, to find even just a few minutes each day to practice being silent and focusing on God’s presence and anticipating that God will speak to us or move us in some way.

*God bless,  
Pastor Eric*

