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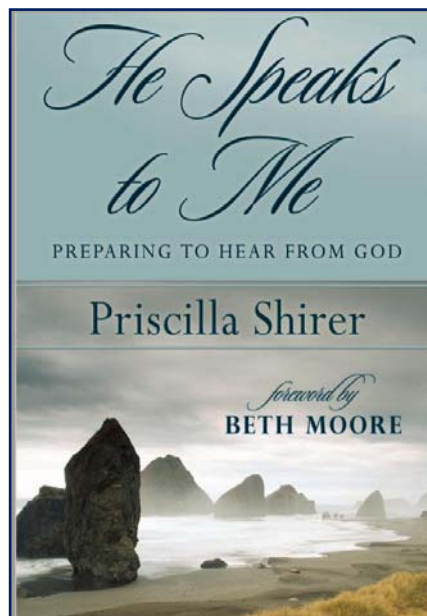
"SIT DOWN AND BE STILL"

[A STILL ATTENTIVENESS – 1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10]

WEEKLY SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

AUGUST 17, 2008

LESSON #4 FROM THE **MASTER WORKS** SERIES STUDY OF:



“SIT DOWN AND BE STILL”

[A STILL ATTENTIVENESS – 1 SAMUEL 3: 1-10]



If there is one thing that drives us almost insane ... If there is one thing that we cannot stand ... If there is one thing that makes us uncomfortable it's...

(TEACHER STOPS AND SIMPLY STANDS FOR A FULL MINUTE, DOING NOTHING BUT WAITING, SEEMING TO BE ABOUT TO SPEAK BUT THEN REFRAINING, SIPPING ON A GLASS OF WATER, AND LOOKING AT HIS WATCH. UNTIL FINALLY, HE SPEAKS...) **silence.**

Silence. We live in a culture that does not know what to do with being silent or still. In the Old Testament book of **Habakkuk (2:20)**, we are told, *“The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him.”* But silence drives us nuts! But we can't be still.

Today, as we continue our Bible study from Priscilla Shirer's book, *He Speaks To Me*, we look at the fourth characteristic that we discover in Samuel's life essential for hearing from God—he was **still**. Turn to **1 SAMUEL 3:3-4 (NASB)** and follow along as I read a portion of our Scripture about this: *³and the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and **Samuel was lying down** in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was, ⁴that the LORD called Samuel; and he said, “Here I am.”*

So, what was Samuel doing? He was *lying down*. He was *still*. All day long, Samuel had ministered (worshipped) to the Lord and done good things in the temple. Now his chores were done for the day, everything was quiet, and Eli was asleep. God was awake, however, and He had a message for Samuel. With his thoughts quiet and his emotions stilled, Samuel was positioned to hear God's voice.

I have put a very familiar verse in your chair this morning as this week's memory verse and encourage you to take it along with you all week and learn it as you're getting caught up in

the busyness of life. Listen to the familiar words from **PSALM 46:10 (NIV)** about being still: *"Be still, and know that I am God."* Simple, yet in our culture we don't like to be still. We don't like to be quiet. We don't like to be silent. It drives us nuts!

Maybe it is the fault of our parents. It's their fault. If your parents were like my parents, they were constantly telling you to "be quiet, be still and behave." I did the same to my children. There's a familiar saying that says, *"Children should be ___?___ and not ___?___."* Yes, **seen** and not **heard**. Ever wonder where that came from? Did our parents invent it? What about God's Word? Turn to **PSALM 37:7** and someone read the first sentence of that passage: *"Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him;"*

Yet, as adults, we seem to have rebelled against our parents and what God wants. We don't like to be quiet. We don't like to be still. So we live a life that is busy, and active and restless. We have this feeling that if we are not doing something, saying something, planning something, then we are not being productive and if we are not being productive, then we are wasting our time. Is that you? Don't ask Beverly about how well I do with QUIET TIME, she would certainly tell you not to be like the teacher. Sort of a *"do as I say, not as I do"* philosophy.

If you're like me, you feel like you need to be active every minute of the day. A generation or two ago, the life of the family was going to be revolutionized by the automatic washing machine. Up until then, cleaning the family's laundry literally took an entire day. People referred to one day of their weekly routine as WASH DAY. Then technology came through with the washing machine, and you could throw the clothing into a machine, and then leave it and go do something else. What a time saver.

So what happened? Did we get more time to relax? To be still? To be quiet? A Harris survey in 1965 predicted that as the time-saving devices were incorporated into everyday life, like computers, faxes, cell phones, etc., that by **1985** the average American workday would only be **22 hours** a week. What happened? Why if that if we're saving all this time. The survey didn't take into account our drive for MORE, MORE, MORE. We filled our time with other duties. The computer works the same way. It enables us to do more of our work in a lot less time. But do we get off work early? No. We simply do more work. There is something within us that compels us to fill up every moment of our time.

Even if we are not talking about work, our families are stretched to the limit with activities as we go from gymnastic and ballet classes to soccer to outings at the beach to concerts, to this and to that. It is as if we are afraid of what might happen if we would just be still for a moment. If we would just be – [QUIET](#). Many of us may just be too busy serving. Look back at 1 Samuel 3:3 about Samuel and tell me what you see? He's *lying down*—he's *still*. Yet he's awake. He ready to hear the *still quiet voice* of God.

In our study of Samuel, we need to be reminded that each of us must carve time out of our busy day to sit quietly in the presence of Jesus so He can speak to us individually—one on one. [Are you missing out on what Jesus wants to say to YOU because you're so busy serving?](#)

But if you think this is just a modern problem, think again. I think this might have been part of Martha's problem. Turn to **LUKE 10: 38-42 (NIV)** and let's look at what was happening here. Remember that the Lord and His disciples had dropped in for supper at the home of Martha, Lazarus and Mary. Martha was running around madly trying to get food on the table. She expected her sister to help her, but Mary was just sitting around, listening to Jesus. Picking up in verse 38, follow along: *³⁸As Jesus and his disciples were on their way,*

*he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? **Tell her to help me!**" ⁴¹"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴²but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."*

Can you identify with Martha? It was just too much to take for her. So Martha went to Jesus and said bluntly, in verse 40, "Tell her to help me!" But notice the very next verse and Jesus' response: ⁴¹"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are **worried and upset about many things**, ⁴²but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Like so many of us, Martha was too busy serving to sit down, and so she was hungry and cranky. Mary, on the other hand was sitting peacefully at the Lord's feet being filled with the Bread of Life. **Don't the *good* things often keep us too busy to sit still at Jesus' feet and receive the *best* of what He has for us?**

Martha was so busy serving, she missed the blessing that Jesus had for her. And so it is with us. Jesus is in the midst of our life. But we become distracted and upset at many things. Our world is so busy, our lives are so full. And we like it that way. We like it because a busy life makes us feel important.

How many of you want to be important? We all do. We want to be important. We want to be valuable. We want to be worth something to others. One of the things that attracts us to the Gospel is the Good News that God loves us. We are important to God. The God who made and maintains the

entire universe believes we are important enough to pay attention to and to love and to care for. We are important enough to God that he sent his Son Jesus Christ to die for us and for our salvation. Recall the words from **JOHN 3:16**, *“ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*

But for some reason, that is not enough. We need something else to validate our lives – we need a busy schedule. We fall into the trap of believing that if we are busy, then we are important. We need to know that it is OK for us to let go of our busy-ness, and to be quiet, and still, and not be so busy. That was the key to Samuel hearing the voice of God. Don't forget the words Jesus spoke to Martha in verse 41 because they apply to you and to me! Sometimes when I am so BUSY doing good things, teaching, preaching, ministry or even preparing lessons at home, I've found that the Lord doesn't speak to me while I'm in the midst of those good things. He doesn't speak when I'm like Martha, *“worried and upset about many things.”* He speaks to me when no one's around, when I'm not distracted or focused on other things, when the house is quiet. It's when my mind, body and emotions are still that He ministers and speaks to me. This seemed to be the case with Samuel as well. It's not that God doesn't want us to serve—He does. It's just that we must find a balance between serving and spending time in His presence.

We often miss out on His blessings because we just won't be still. Let's look at another example in Scripture so we won't miss the point that God wants us to sometime just *sit down* and *be still* before He speaks. Turn to **JOHN 6 (NIV)** and see if you see the point here. This passage in John describes the very familiar story about feeding of the five thousand. You've heard the story over and over, but may have missed something because it's so familiar. Recall that a multitude of people had listened to Jesus teach all day long, and as evening approached, their stomachs began to growl. Jesus

knew the people were hungry, and He had a discussion with the disciples about how to feed them. You see all of that in the first nine verses of John 6, but look at **verse 10**: *“Jesus said, ‘Have the people sit down.’ ”* With those words, Jesus said to His disciples AND TO US TODAY, *“Sit down. Be Still.”*

Friday morning, after Beverly had already left the house to go up to Amy’s house to keep our grandson, Banks, I seemed to be running a little behind. It was already after 7:30 and although I had spent a good while doing my devotion and meditation, I had not really had any face-on-the-floor prayer time. On the morning that Beverly goes to Amy’s house, we don’t have time as a couple to pray together. As I put on my coat and was getting ready to walk out the door, the Holy Spirit tugged at me and said, *“What about your prayer time.”* I shrugged it off and thought, I’ll catch it tonight. I need to get over to Starbucks and get my coffee and then head on in to the office early. Again, another pause and tug came.

I felt as if God was telling me to sit down—be still. My first response after that was, *“Why, Lord? I’m so busy. I have a to-do list a mile long and it’s Friday. WHY do you want me to sit down?”* As I put my folder down and went back to the chair to sit down for a second, God reminded me of this passage from John 6 about feeding the 5,000. Look at the very next verse of John 6, **verse 11**: *“Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated.”*

Please don’t miss that line. He distributed to **those who were seated**. Only those who were seated got food! Priscilla Shirer gives a similar example in her book on this—a busy, busy time when God also told her to sit down. When she asked why He wanted her to sit down, she felt God tell her, *“Priscilla, I want to fill you, but I can’t fill you until you take your seat.”* Just like with me, God was asking her—and YOU—to cease our frantic activity and let go on our worry and frustration so He could minister to us.



[In what ways do you sense God telling you to be still so He can speak to you? Do you want to be filled with the spiritual food God has for you?](#) Then you'd better sit down, because He's only distributing fish and loaves to the people who are seated. We often miss out on His blessings because we just won't be still.

No matter what's going on in your life right now—good, bad or somewhere in-between—God knows what you need and is ready to speak to you. But, you must sit down and be still—and know that He is God. In the stillness, He will speak and we will find rest in Him. Turn back to **1 SAMUEL 3:15** as I follow-up on this thought for a second. At this point, God had just spoken to little Samuel and told him what was going to happen to Eli and his sons (vv 11-14). Picking up with verse 15, what did Samuel do after hearing this from the Lord? *"Samuel lay down until morning and then opened the doors of the house of the LORD..."*

How do you think Samuel slept after God told him that Eli's family was going to be cut off from the priesthood and his two sons were about to die? If it had been me, I think I would have been pacing the floor of the temple all night trying to figure out what I was going to do the next day. But the Bible says that Samuel *"lay down until morning."* Priscilla Shirer thinks that Samuel could sleep well and go confidently about his business the next morning because his life was aligned with God's plans for him. Samuel no longer depended upon his mentor and the high priest, Eli, and his soul was still and quiet. He was resting in peace, depending upon God to show Himself strong to him.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon told the story of old Betty, who was converted late in her life, and though she was very poor she was very active. She visited the sick; out of her own poverty she gave to those who were still poorer; she collected a little money from others when she could give none of her own, and told many of the love of the Savior. At last she caught a cold



and rheumatism and lay in bed month after month, pain-worn and helpless. A minister went to see her and asked if after her active habits she did not find the change very hard to bear. Listen to Betty's reply: "No sir, not at all. When I was well, I used to hear the Lord say, day by day, 'Betty, go here. Betty, go there. Betty, do this. Betty do that,'" and I used to do it as well as I could. And now I hear him say every day, 'Betty, lie still ...'"

Can you do that? When things just aren't going right in the world or in your life, can you just sit down and be still? Do you have a *quieted soul*, like David? As David prepared to ascent the throne of Israel, he confessed his inadequacy. Turn to **PSALM 131:1-2 (HCSB)** and follow along as I read the words of a powerful man who would soon be king. This is one of the *Psalms of Ascent* that I will be leading a new Beth Moore Bible study on beginning in a couple of weeks. Listen: *¹"LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I do not get involved with things too great or too difficult for me. ² Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself like a little weaned child with its mother; I am like a little child."*

What did David say, just as he was about to become the most powerful man in the land—the King of Israel? Amazing. He didn't take credit for the blessings in his life; instead he made himself more dependent upon God, how? By *weaning* himself from his own talents and ambitions and trusting in the Lord as a child trusts a loving parent.

To have an intimate relationship with the Father, all believers must eventually come to the point where they courageously tear themselves away from things that keep them from depending completely upon God. However, none of us will wean ourselves from our dependence on worldly things without discipline and discomfort. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we have to purposefully and oftentimes painfully deny ourselves. When we begin the weaning process, we may feel uneasy, fretful and uncomfortable. But with practice, it

becomes easier to turn to God for comfort and spiritual nourishment. Can you do that in your life?

If we continue to allow God to fill us, sooner or later we'll find that nothing else will satisfy. Can you stop, sit down, and be still and quiet so God can speak to you—and you can, in turn, listen? Quiet not only your mouth, but your mind; and your spirit; and your very being. **Be still and know... that He... is God.** Don't trust in the false security of wealth, or popularity, or power, or politics. They may seem secure but they will come out from under you and be carried into the sea, and if your trust is there, you will be carried with them. Be still and know... that he is God. It's simple sounding, isn't it. So why can't we get it through our heads to listen and simply obey? *"Be still and know that I am God."*

Please notice with me that God is not calling you to figure it all out? Did you notice that the psalmist does not give you three points and a poem explaining exactly the propositions and presuppositions one must have to find the help and strength of God. He simply says be still and know that he is God. Wonder why we want to complicate it so much beyond that? Remember, we are to make ourselves like *little children*, Jesus says.

I kind of laugh at that kind of simplicity and its wonder and its profound nature, **until** I try and **be still**. Until I try to quiet my mouth, and the few times I am successful, I still struggle to quiet my soul and my heart and know, just know that he is God and that he is with me. God calls me to find him as my refuge and him as my strength not through a logical or intellectual exercise or propositions and points. I could do that much easier. God calls me to be still and to know him, to experience him, to commune with him, to be still and know that he is God and in that stillness to find to find my refuge, my strength, my ever present help in trouble.

I remember as a child when I was a little too noisy and busy in church, my mother would reach over and pinch me—ever so gently. Well, I’m not a kid anymore. And my mother doesn’t pinch me on the arm in church. But still I so greatly struggle to just be still and maybe that’s why I don’t hear God speaking sometime. How about you?

Let’s pray!



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