



Holy Silence: The Gift of Quaker Spirituality

J. Brent Bill

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People of all faiths and backgrounds are drawn to silence. They yearn for it in these busy and difficult times, but often, when silence becomes available, we don't know what to do with it. For centuries, Quakers have taught that when we are silent, God grants us insights, guidance, and spiritual understanding that is different from what we might realize in our noisy, everyday lives. In this profound book, J. Brent Bill invites readers to discover this and other unique gifts of Quaker spirituality. The result is a satisfying experience and taste of a spiritual tradition unflinching in its dedication to listening for the sounds and voice of God.

Holy Silence: The Gift of Quaker Spirituality Details

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From Reader Review Holy Silence: The Gift of Quaker Spirituality for online ebook

Gloria says

This is the best book thus far in my exploration of Quaker belief and lifestyle. It provides contemporary and historical information and lets the reader know what you might expect if you attended a meeting. It also includes examples of queries, which lead the participant to a place of quiet contemplation. Good bibliography included, too.

Carl Williams says

In the spirit of transparency, Brent Bill is a fellow Quaker, and a valued acquaintance.

This book is a wonderful read—

- part memoir,
- part devotional,
- part celebration of the Religious Society of Friends' institutional memory,
- part spiritual discipline practice.

It's best consumed slowly, with time to savor—reflect on a phrase or an idea of one of the suggested queries. Recommended for both seasoned Friends, and seekers alike.

Mary says

For anyone seeking to really meditate on peace and calm, this book provides great insight into practicing the art of listening to God in silence. J.Brent Bill explains various aspects of the Quaker discipline of silence which is much more than the absence of noise. Each section includes thoughts to meditate on and offer up to God in prayer. A great read for anyone seeking God's guidance and helpful ways to find and hold on to the "holy hush."

Ferrell says

This book is good but gets tiresome after a while. It is hard to write about silence, I suspect. I did like the part near the end which gave some guidance on attending a Quaker service.

Chris says

I really enjoyed this book, Brent Bill has done a wonderful job of explaining why Quakers across the world

value silent worship. The book isn't some dry or dull textbook but is written with such pure enthusiasm and love of God you can't help but feel enriched after reading it

Whether you are a practicing Quaker or just someone who is interested you can't go wrong with this book!

Nikki says

This was a sweet little book about silence in the Quaker tradition, offering helpful prompts for reflection, and suggestions for including time for contemplative silence in personal life. I liked some of the 'silence practices' presented at the end, such as trying to find a lesson or blessing in the noises or distractions that are particularly annoying when trying to settle into silence, or imagining a moment of silence as an opportunity to present 'symptoms' to a 'spiritual physician' and wait quietly for a diagnosis and 'prescription' to emerge. Some of the rather literal theological language was a little jarring for me, but generally I found that I was able to relate to the meaning behind the words (e.g. by substituting "Life", "Love", or "Truth" for more personalised terms for the divine).

Chantale says

Brent Bill is my wisest Friend, and also my dearest. But, still, i read his book with the objectivity of anyone, curious to know what could be said about silence. Before Quakerism in my life, silence was my strongest foundation. Whatever happened, there was always a silence awaiting to be embraced, ready to be filled. But little did i know about Holy Silence. Brent Bill gives meaning to the ordinary with his advice and observation on something we may not have paid enough attention to. Holy Silence reached many people, and that's no coincidence. Quaker or not, religious or not, you might find that road that leads to a divine meaning in your daily life, right here in that book. At least, i did.

Leah says

Friendly Quaker Silence for Everyone

"The Quaker view that all of life, including silence, is sacramental is based in the Bible as well as in Friendly faith. It is a practice solidly grounded in Christian theology, history, and Scripture." Holy Silence, page 21.

I've read, blogged, and reviewed several of Brent's books and always appreciate that they're never too long, that he has close connections to nature, the environment, the land (I hope so, because he's a farmer!) and especially that all of them emphasize ways we can live closer to God and to all of God's creation.

In theological and in practical everyday terms, I often consider "holy" as the sacred wholly-other-than the profane, the mundane, than the routinely commonplace. Then again, holy is the very here and now regular common earthbound stuff of our daily activities as we move closer to praying always and in all ways a sense of God's presence in, with, and under all the we do and everything we are. J. Brent Bill named his mostly photography website "Holy Ordinary." To my sacramental, liturgical tradition that affirms God's self-

revelation, God's self-giving and grace via physical, earthly, everyday "means," Holy Ordinary sounds... highly sacramental. Although Quakers, or Friends don't formally practice ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, they do have a well-known formal practice of sitting in silence. So well-known that besides the guy on Quaker cereal boxes, silent worship probably is the main aspect of the Society of Friends most people have heard about. Then again, some Quakers have programmed worship that includes the usual type of printed Order of Worship bulletin handout, hymns, prayers offered out loud, a sermon or homily.

The author gives us a short synopsis of biblical and Christian practices of silence; not surprisingly, early in the book Brent cites the famous story of Elijah not encountering God until the still small voice, whisper, or (best version) sheer silence. I love the idea of silence being sheer; sheer sounds transparent, see-through to our senses and perceptions.

Brent is very clear that Christians from very different traditions such as mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics that emphasize sacraments, Pentecostals who rejoice in the more demonstratively eschatological gifts of the Holy Spirit, easily can make Holy Silence at least a weekly, possibly a daily or monthly practice. He mentioned scheduling the Friends Meeting at his own farmhouse for a time other than Sunday mornings so people committed to Sunday worship with a different tradition also could take advantage of meeting Jesus in common community silence. In sheer silence, so the presence of God permeates all our senses.

Final note: the plain yet elegant silver on white cover of this second edition of Holy Silence conveys a strong sense of what's inside those covers.

Richard Lewis says

“This little book is an invitation to experience more fully the life-changing power of sacred silence.” Silence is powerful! We all need a daily dose of silence!

I walk away with three takeaways from this wonderful book.

“Quaker silence is pregnant with holy expectation. It is filled with anticipation that Jesus will be there.” I practice centering prayer. Centering prayer opens me to the gift of contemplative prayer. Contemplative prayer is a silent sit with God. I bring no agenda. I open my mind, heart and body to God who is beyond thoughts, words and emotions. I sit with God because I love God.

During centering prayer, I open to God's presence and action within. I will continue to be open but I will also “expect” that Jesus will be there! I will also “expect” that Jesus will speak to me! “Quaker silence is filled with expectation-expectation that God will speak. When we hear God, our lives are changed.”

I sit in silence two to three times per day. “In the New Testament we find many examples of Jesus's seeking the silence of solitude, even group solitude.” I need silence in community. There are centering prayer groups in my community. I must seek them out and also sit in community silence. Silence in community is powerful. Brent shares what to expect when you attend a traditional Quaker silent service. Two years ago I attended a traditional Quaker silent service. I sat in an old meeting house with at least one hundred adults and children. I must do so again. I miss this vital form of silence.

At the end of the book, Brent provides some silent practices. One practice caught my attention. “As you move through this day, look for places where you might be quiet....washing dishes, riding the train to the

office, walking in the woods.” These moments are available to us each day. It is in these ordinary and sometimes mundane moments that I can and will encounter the Divine.

“I need God’s help. That is why holy silence is an important part of Quaker life.” I too need God’s help! Where will I best find God’s help? I will find it in the silence of the holy hush.

Please read this short but life-changing book. It will forever change how you think about silence.

Rich Lewis
www.SilenceTeaches.com

Gloria says

This is an updated version of a signature book by a Quaker pastor and speaker. Have never been a Quaker but have great respect for them. Here the subject is finding God in the silence, pretty much the opposite style of any mega-church you may imagine. This is restful and useful prodding to step out of our busy world for a bit in order to get centered once again.

Rebekah says

Timing is everything and this book came my way at a time I was exploring spiritual dimensions of music. So this book took me in a very different direction with the emphasis on divine encounter through silence. It has helped me reflect on ways in which I can understand silence spiritually rather than to see it as an absence of doing, verbally expressing, or hearing. As it's written from a Quaker perspective it provides a sacramental approach to silence in worship, in daily living, and in spiritual growth both individually and collectively. I imagine I will come back to this book every now and then as a guide and reminder of the importance and power of silence in Christian life.

Barbara M says

I loved this book. I regularly practice meditation and have learned to appreciate the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of silence. J. Brent Bill does an excellent job introducing readers to the benefits of silence and how it can be elevated into a spiritual practice. His tips for finding and cultivating silence in the midst of a busy and noisy world were right on target.

It's the best book I have read on this subject.

Richard Lewis says

"Holy Silence" is a wonderful journey into Quaker Silence. Silence is a good teacher. God is in the silence waiting to teach us. Unfortunately we are afraid of silence. We do not realize that silence will nourish our soul.

Let me highlight a few key points from this powerful book that jumped out at me. To be honest, there were just too many points I wanted to highlight. You will need to read the book for yourself so you can find the rest of them.

"Quaker silence is filled with expectation—expectation that God will speak." We must take the time to practice this silence. God will speak to us when we show up. "Holy silence is there for us anytime we need or want it."

Who is this silence for? "The amazing thing is that this silence is for every one—harried mother, busy businessperson, or frenetic teen." We think we do not qualify to sit in silence. We are not religious enough. We are not schooled with the right education. Nonsense. That has nothing to do with it. The light is in each one of us. Sit in silence with this light. See what happens.

"Holy silence infuses us with God's spirit and power so that we can live faithfully in life's common ventures: youth, adulthood, marriage, work, family, illness, and death." Silence spawns action. It is within the silence that we best discern how to live our lives.

"The silence calls us to ask, "What does God want?""

"When we get quiet and still together, we create a space for God to work within us personally and communally." There is something very powerful about sitting in silence communally. If you have never done so, you must. I once sat in an old meeting house. I sat with 100, including children. Silence in community is powerful!

"But even a silence junkie like me needs to remember that spiritual silence takes effort and intentionality." Yes. We must show up no matter how difficult it is. "One reason that being quiet is hard is that it's not a part of our lives. We're not used to it." "We like noise because it shows action." It is a discipline. We must show up. Enter silence. This is God's classroom.

"Silence moves us from difficult self-examination, to healing, to relaxing in God's presence." If we let it, silence will transform us. Silence will reveal our innermost thoughts. Silence will heal us. Silence will help us relax in God's loving presence.

"If Jesus sensed the need for silence, then I need to learn how to sense this need, too." I am a centering prayer practitioner. Quaker silence is a terrific complement to my centering prayer practice. Quaker silence is yet another way to meet God in the silence. Silence is not empty. It is filled with God. Read "Holy Silence". You will not be disappointed.

J. Bill says

My favorite new book by ... me! :)

J. Bill says

Of course I like it -- I wrote it...

