

Experiencing Silence



Stations of life for silence

“The sole cause of man's unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room.” – Blaise Pasca

Welcome to Bethesda life centre. Bethesda was an actual pool in Jerusalem to which people came in Jesus' time to be healed. One man, we read of in John 5, suffered from an illness for 38 years and laid beside the pool. He was helpless and hoped someone would care enough to help him. It did not happen, but he eventually met Jesus at the pool and was healed. Jesus said the following well-known words when He healed the man: “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!” (John 5:8). The man was healed instantaneously. His healing restored his health and his relationship with God. Later the Bible documents that he witnessed to others how his life has been changed. We believe that Jesus will also meet you at our modern-day Bethesda.

- Your journey at Bethesda:
 - Start at the Chapel, where you will receive a booklet that guides you through the process.
 - Take a seat in the Chapel and read the introduction of the booklet.

- Then light a candle in front of the Chapel as a symbol of the Light of life, Jesus Christ, inviting Him to accompany you through the life stations in the garden.
- Kneel in front of the Chapel or at your seat and pray the prayer in the booklet or your own prayer to place your trust in Jesus for the journey.
- Move through the stations as the Lord leads you. At each station, read the appropriate portion of the booklet. If you do not know where the next station is, please follow the map at the back.
- When you have passed through all the stations, the journey ends in the Chapel, where you may read the conclusion or summary and partake in communion yourself.
- There are spiritual directors and counsellors available in the counselling centre to assist you should you need to have a conversation about your experience.
- These stations are a place of silence. Withhold yourself from starting conversations with others and respect them as they use the opportunity to experience the Lord too!
- PLEASE NOTE: All the representations in the garden, such as images and objects, are just focal points and not sacred in themselves. The time and space you create in your life today are holy because of God's encounter with you!

Introduction (In the chapel or just before the first station)

You came today because you need to be quiet. Being silent has several benefits to your life. First of all, it gives you an escape to a holy space where you can hear God's voice. In the second place it delivers you from the suffering of repetitive thoughts that plague your life so that you can find physical, emotional, and spiritual rest. Finally, it helps you surrender to God so that you can experience the power of his life and provision. Jesus regularly withdrew



into silence to pray in the holy space of silence: *“Before daybreak the next morning, Jesus got up and went out to an isolated place to pray”* (Mark 1:35). God is inviting you today with the words: *“Be still, and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10).

We live in a world that pollutes us with noise so that we lose ourselves in the noise. Sometimes we confuse being silent with other ways of silence. There are three important ways of silence. One is to turn off the noise around you. The next way of silence is to remain silent. The third is when we experience silence in our minds. It’s when the repetitive thoughts in our head come to rest about what’s happened and everything that’s going to happen. We call this silence. When you become silent in your being, you shift your focus to the present moment and the specific scripture that’s in front of you to ponder on and allow the Holy Spirit to open it up for you so that God can speak to you. The “Stations of Life” is going to guide you to become silent, create a space to meditate, renew your relationship with God so that you can hear His voice again. The stations in the gardens were created on the pattern of Jesus’ life so that you can identify with the life of Jesus in your meditations. Jesus himself practiced silence to experience awareness of God.

When you look closely at the stations of Jesus’ life, you will become aware of where you are in your life and what has caused spiritual fatigue in your life. Perhaps you feel like you’re in a desert where you’ve lost your desire for life and happiness. Today is an opportunity to recharge yourself with spiritual strength through your journey with Jesus in the garden. Now make the decision to leave behind everything that has happened in the past and everything you worry about that has yet to happen in the future. Your time in the garden is an appointment with God, focus on that. Now do a short breathing exercise in which you focus on breathing in and out while centring your thoughts in the present.

Take an opportunity to light a candle in front of the chapel as a symbol of God's light shining in your life today. When you light the candle, stand still for a moment and look deep into the light of the flame. Try to be present, let it be symbolic of something that starts burning in your soul and spirit. After each station it will burn ever brighter until it illuminates all darkness in your life.

You now have an opportunity to light a candle in front of the chapel as a symbol of God's light shining over your life.

Following the candle lighting, you can pray this prayer or your own prayer in the front of the chapel:

Your prayer of dedication: Lord I am here today because I want to be silent. Help me to be quiet, to isolate myself and to become silent in my deepest being so that I can meet you. Amen.

Three important guidelines for practicing silence.

- Try to be present. The present moment is the only thing that is real. The past is finished and the future has not yet arrived. We can only remember the past and anticipate the future, but the only place we can live is in the present moment. The most important fact of reality is that God is present in every moment. Forgetting this is forgetting the most important aspect of life. The only place you're going to meet God is in the now. Jesus said, "*I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*" So he is the God of the living, not the dead" (Matthew 22:32). He is the great "I am" not the "I was" nor the "I will be". He has been present in every moment in the past that we can be grateful for and will be present in every moment in the future that gives us hope, but He is the One who is alive and active in the moment and that is the only aspect that is truly real. This means that you need to keep your focus in the present.

- Take every thought about the past and future captive to obedience in Christ. When a thought comes up, acknowledge it but move away from it and bring your thoughts back to the place of focus.
- If you are struggling try to use other techniques such as breathing, writing, and writing scripture to keep your attention.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly” (Matthew 11:28–30, Message).

1. Announcement Station (of Jesus’ birth) – Luke 1:26–35, 38

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, ‘Greetings, favoured woman! The Lord is with you!’ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ‘Don’t be afraid, Mary,’ the angel told her, ‘for you have found favour with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!’ Mary asked the angel, ‘But how can this happen? I am a virgin.’ The angel replied, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God.’ ” – Luke 1:26–35



The two great enemies of being present and controlling our thoughts are usually our reproaches about the past or our fears about the future. In the announcement, Mary was overwhelmed in an instant because of her fears. She immediately began to think: How can I have a child? I am too young? What will my parents say? How will the Jewish community ever accept this? One can imagine how these thoughts overwhelmed Mary. But Mary presently handed herself over to God and replied: *“I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true”* (Luke 1:38).

What is going on in your life right now that causes noise in your mind so that you can’t hear the voice of God? Write down some of the thoughts that overwhelm you and destroy your zest for life. These may be thoughts of what happened in the past or fears about the future:

Surrender your thoughts of the past and the future now to the Lord so that you can become silent and experience God's voice.

What is your prayer to God?

2. Birth Station (Incarnation) – John 1:1–5, 14

“God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.” – C.

S. Lewis

“In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. God sent a man, John the Baptist, to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world he created, but the world didn’t recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.” – John 1:1–12



Be quiet while you sit at the station of the birth. For a few moments, try to stop your many thoughts by focusing on your breathing. Your mind will immediately go to your life or problems, but try to stop it by listening to your own breathing. Listen to it and feel the oxygen moving into your lungs. Then count how many times you breathe in and out. Now try to shift your focus to the scripture. Read it and then focus to see in your mind’s eye how Jesus, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, created the world in the beginning. See how Jesus, the light in the dark world, began to shine the moment He was born. See how the light shines in everyone’s life that accepts Him. See yourself in darkness and experience how every part of your life is illuminated by His presence.

What do you hear when you shift your focus to the scriptures?

3. Hidden years (Childhood of Jesus) – John 1:46–47; Luke 2:41–52

“You’re not defined by your past; you’re prepared by it. You’re stronger, more experienced, and you have greater confidence.” — Joel Osteen



“As they approached, Jesus said, ‘Now here is a genuine son of Israel—a man of complete integrity.’ ‘How do you know about me?’ Nathanael asked. Jesus replied, ‘I could see you under the fig tree before Philip found you.’ Then Nathanael exclaimed, ‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God—the King of Israel!’ Jesus asked him, ‘Do you believe this just because I told you I had seen you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.’ Then he said, ‘I tell you the truth, you will all see heaven open and the angels of God going up and down on the Son of Man, the one who is the stairway between heaven and earth.’” — John 1:47–51

Each of us has a hidden past just like Jesus and Nathanael had. Nathanael did not think that Jesus knew anything about his past. Jesus makes it known that when Nathanael sat under a fig tree and thought he was alone, He saw him. Nathanael was blissfully unaware that God had noticed him. Today, you look back at your past which is hidden from other people, but it has a tremendous influence on your life. God knows what you’ve gone through in your life up to where you’re sitting in the garden today. God understands your past, your pain, and your challenges. Nathanael exclaimed: “You are the Son of God.” Through his confession, he placed his faith in Jesus and was saved. Now become aware of who Jesus is in this moment and put your faith in Him as well.

What is God's message to you?

What is your prayer towards God?

4. Baptism – Matthew 3:13, 16–17

“Then Jesus went from Galilee to the Jordan River to be baptised by John. But John tried to talk him out of it. ‘I am the one who needs to be baptised by you,’ he said, ‘so why are you coming to me?’ But Jesus said, ‘It should be done, for we must carry out all that God requires.’ So John agreed to baptise him. After his baptism, as Jesus came up



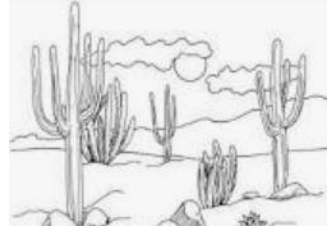
out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy.’” – Matthew 3:13–17

When people become silent, it is usually thoughts of inferiority and insecurity that plague their minds. You are invited today to think about what happened at Jesus’ baptism and how it applies to your life as well. God, the Father, acknowledges Jesus, who He was, His obedience, and who He is meant to be. Just as God the Father declares that Jesus is His beloved Son, God’s statement stands firm over you too: *“See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don’t recognize that we are God’s children because they don’t know him”* (1 John 3:1).

Think about these words and what they mean for your life:

5. Temptation – Matthew 4:1–11

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.’ But Jesus told him, ‘No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ’ Then the devil took him to the holy city, Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will order his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’ ’ Jesus responded, ‘The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not test the Lord your God.’ ’ Next the devil took him to the peak of a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ‘I will give it all to you,’ he said, ‘if you will kneel down and worship me.’ ‘Get out of here, Satan,’ Jesus told him. ‘For the Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’ ’ Then the devil went away, and angels came and took care of Jesus.” – Matthew 4:1–11



Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by Satan. There He was confronted with three temptations that would lead Him away from God’s purpose for His life. Jesus was hungry, so Satan tempted him to make bread from the stones. Jesus could easily have shown that He was God and could abuse it to jump off the temple roof. Jesus could also have taken shortcuts on Satan’s terms to give in rather than die as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. But Jesus refused, and because he stood in conviction, the angels came to serve him. God has a purpose for your life and Satan will always try to destroy that plan. Just like in Jesus’s case, the enemy usually tempts us where we are weak. When you sit in silence, ask

the Lord to show you where your weaknesses are. Now surrender them to the Lord and ask Him to strengthen you!

What is God's message to you?

6. Ministry – Luke 4:16–19

“When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favour has come.’ ” – Luke 4:16–19



Jesus declares in the Synagogue that He came to set people free, heal and restore them. He also came to free you from the suffering of repetitive thoughts that plague you. Take the opportunity now to apply Jesus' announcement to your life.

Write down the thoughts that plague you and trust the Lord to set you free from them and announce the time of the Lord's favour!

What is God's message to you?

What is your prayer towards God?

7. Glorification – Mark 9:2–8

“Six days later Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone. As the men watched, Jesus’ appearance was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white, far whiter than any earthly bleach could ever make them. Then Elijah and Moses appeared and began talking with Jesus. Peter exclaimed, ‘Rabbi, it’s wonderful for us to be here! Let’s make three shelters as memorials — one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ He said this because he didn’t really know what else to say, for they were all terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my dearly loved Son. Listen to him.’ Suddenly, when they looked around, Moses and Elijah were gone, and they saw only Jesus with them.” – Mark 9:2–8



When you look at the image in the garden, you see Peter being blinded by Jesus’ glory. In the moment, Peter realised that Jesus was God. The moment was so great that he wanted to stay permanently on the mountain

in His glory. Yet the Father spoke through a cloud and said: “This is my beloved Son, listen to Him!” For the disciples, the voice of the Father was an encouragement to obey Jesus and so be part of God’s glory. Do you also long for the glory that gives peace in your life? Part of our problem is that we don’t realise who Jesus is. This hinders us to exercise faith in His power that changes our lives. See in your mind’s eye Jesus on Mount Tabor in his glorified state. To attain God’s glory in our lives we must follow Jesus in obedience. This is what brings forth God’s favour in our lives. What is God asking you to do today?

8. Suffering – Mat.27:22, 26–31

“Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced.” – Soren Kierkegaard

“So Pilate released Barabbas to them. He ordered Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip, then turned him over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. Some of the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. They wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head, and they placed a reed stick in his right hand as a scepter. Then they knelt before him in mockery and taunted, ‘Hail! King of the Jews!’ And they spit on him and grabbed the stick and struck him on the head with it. When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.”
– Matthew 27:26–31



When you look at the pillar in the station with the crown of thorns, handcuffs, and thorn bush, think of Jesus who suffered for you so that you might receive peace. The prophet Isaiah prophesied hundreds of years before Jesus was born that his suffering would bring us peace: *“But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed”* (Isaiah 53:5). Meditate on this scripture and make this promise of peace your own!

What is God’s message to you?

9. Crucifixion John 19:17, 23, 28–30

“Carrying the cross by himself, he went to the place called Place of the Skull (in Hebrew, Golgotha). There they nailed him to the cross. Two others were crucified with him, one on either side, with Jesus between them. And Pilate



posted a sign on the cross that read, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’ The place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that many people could read it. Then the leading priests objected and said to Pilate, ‘Change it from ‘The King of the Jews’ to ‘He said, I am King of the Jews.’ Pilate replied, ‘No, what I have written, I have written.’ When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they divided his clothes

among the four of them. They also took his robe, but it was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. So they said, ‘Rather than tearing it apart, let’s throw dice for it.’ This fulfilled the Scripture that says, ‘They divided my garments among themselves and threw dice for my clothing.’ So that is what they did. Standing near the cross were Jesus’ mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene.” – John 19:17–25.

It is understood that Jesus Christ was mostly silent during the last hours of his life. Considering all the injustice brought against Him, his silence is almost irritating! At the hearing, He was very quiet. But now on the cross we hardly hear a word – certainly not in response to His tormentors. Why, oh why, was He so quiet? The answer is that He is the second Adam to have come to pay for the sins of the first Adam and all the chosen children of God. In Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *“For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ”*. What right did He have to speak at that moment? He

had no right. He had no right to defend himself. He was guilty. What was there to say? Like a lamb led to the slaughter, He remained mute and did not open his mouth. This is the silence of the Lamb. God said to Jesus Christ, "Do you willingly blame the sins of your people on yourself and are you willing to pay for them? Jesus answered, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will.' " And so, God made his judgement come upon Jesus and in pain he cried out: *"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"* (Matthew 27:45). But it was no defence, no protest; it was certainly no defence before his tormentors. He was silent, and the silence was gold. It was a golden silence because He wasn't trying to get away from what was happening. He accepted paying for our sins and finally said: "It is finished" (John 19:30).

What is God's message to you?

10. Resurrection – Mark 16:1–7

“Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. On the way they were asking each other, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’ But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside. When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, but the angel said, ‘Don’t be alarmed.



You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died.’ ” – Mark 16:2–7.

The Saturday just after the crucifixion of Jesus is often referred to as “Silent Saturday”. A heavy silence hanged over Jerusalem following the busy day during which Jesus was trialed and condemned in the early hours of the previous morning, led away through the streets of Jerusalem, violently crucified, and His subsequent death and burial. It looked like it was over. But while all was quiet, the Holy Spirit began to work through the power of the resurrection. Although silences are sometimes difficult, it contains the promise of God’s resurrection power. Paul makes this clear in his letter to the Romans: *“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you”* (Romans 8:11).

What does this part mean to you?

11. Ascension – Acts 1:6–11

“After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!’ ” – Acts 1:9–11



Jesus ascended to heaven and suddenly He was outside the disciples' sight. From now on they had to live by faith. They no longer heard His voice in their ears and had to hear it now in their spirit. They no longer saw Him, but had to believe by faith that He was as real as He was on earth through the Holy Spirit. When everything around us is quiet, we can still hold on to God. In a shelter for Jews during World War II in Germany, the following inscription was found on a wall: *“I believe in the sun even when it is not shining; I believe in love even when feeling it not; I believe in God even when He is silent.”*

12. Outpouring of Holy Spirit – Acts 2:1–4

“On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.” – Acts 2:1–4



Jesus was gone and in the silence of the disciples' loneliness, they began to wait on the Holy Spirit in prayer. Then came the indescribable event where the Holy Spirit filled people with the greatness of God. People broke the silence by beginning to worship and praise God in different languages.

What is God's message to you?

Return to the Chapel to end your journey for today

You now have spent precious time to rest in the Lord and wait on Him. There is a promise by one of the famous Old Testament prophets: *“He gives power to the weak and strength to the powerless. Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint”* (Isaiah 40:29–31).

Try to practice silence on a daily basis by withdrawing, becoming quite and waiting on the Lord until you gain new strength.

Take part in Communion

In celebration of your relationship with God, you are welcome to partake in communion in front of the Chapel as a symbol of Jesus’ body that has been broken for your freedom and His blood that has been shed for your healing.

Prayer: Lord, I have walked through the stations today to become quiet, to meet You, and to hear Your voice. Thank you for renewing and restoring my spirit! Teach me to do Your will and to live truly abundantly! Amen.