

These little items in my hand are earplugs. They are furnished for us at AEDC for times when we are working in high noise levels, such as near a jet engine test cell or a high velocity wind tunnel. I was wearing them one day, and while they blocked out the tremendous sounds around me, I was amazed that I could hear my footsteps, my heartbeat, my circulation, and my breathing from inside me. I was struck by the thought that there is so much going on inside my body that I take for granted. The noisy environment that we live in with its radio, TV, etc, just blanks it all out. We seldom have a time in our lives where it is really absolutely quiet. I know of some people who even sleep with their radio on.

In the same way, there is so much that goes on in our minds that we take for granted, and never really investigate. Our real self is pushed down below the surface of our consciousness, and we never seem to be able to get in touch with it. I know that you've heard of the word 'meditation'; you probably dismissed it as just a 'preacher' word, and not to be taken seriously. But it is something that can be extremely important. Nobody is too good to meditate. We read time and again that Christ went into the mountain alone for this kind of experience. But I know that it is very hard, especially for young boys and men, to be quiet. It comes with discipline, which usually is coupled with maturity.

One of the things that I enjoy so much about the outdoors is the quiet. All of the noise and confusion of the city has been erased out here. Of course there are a few little sounds, such as the wind whistling through the trees, the birds singing to each other, and the rush of water down a mountainside. But these kind of noises let you think. It amazes me that someone would want to bring a radio out here to puncture all of that.

Meditation is something that you ought to try. When you do, you need to first of all think about yourself. We each need to understand better the relationship that we have with ourselves. But it seems so hard to get serious about anything; each time we approach this kind of thought we push it away from us, and we end up bouncing reality away from us like a basketball. A great philosopher named Pascal once said that we want to divert our minds from ourselves because we can't stand what we really are. Some of the diversions that we have today even allow us to trade our 'miserable' life for a more exciting one, at least for an hour or two at a time.

I think that we are afraid to think of our sinful nature, and our weakness in the sight of God. We are afraid that what is really us won't be acceptable to the crowd we want to impress, and so we keep pushing it away from us. We don't want to accept the fact that we aren't good looking and act cool, or whatever the appropriate word is for that nowadays. But the only way that we can be at peace and in harmony with ourselves is to probe deeply into our own soul, and accept what is there, as the ancient philosopher said, 'Know thyself'. We need a daily 'quiet time' set aside for just this purpose.

When we begin to know ourselves, then we can begin to know God. When the prophet and priest Samuel was growing up, he heard the voice of God calling to him in the quiet of the night. Samuel heard because his mind was prepared, and ready to accept God and his will. God is probably not going to speak to us in this way, for he has given us his word in the Bible. We must imply prepare our minds to receive it. We all have a little bit of God's personality in us, no matter how bad we are. Once we have found out what we are, and have accepted it, then we can seek God and let him change us for the better. But this must be done in quiet, because the distractions of life are Satan's way of hiding the truth from us.

In addition to studying God's word in our quiet time, we can use it as an excellent chance to pray. Our relationship with God depends critically upon our communicating with him, not just his communication to us. Earnest prayer is so hard to achieve with things around to distract us. I have prayed so many times when I felt no communication, like the phone lines to God were down, or he had left the receiver off of the hook. I just couldn't picture him there listening to me. And yet I found that the real problem was that I wasn't sincere; I wasn't going down to the very core of my being and talking to God from there. I was trying to hurry through a worn-out old prayer that really meant nothing to me. I was going through a ritual. Prayer has got to be from the heart. And to hear our heart really well, we need quiet, just as the earplugs enable us to hear our heartbeat.

Finally, when we know ourselves, and we begin to know God, we can then begin to know all of mankind as part of the family of God. This will help us to live in peace with each other. Make good use of your quiet time: you might make friends with yourself and with God.

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