

Making Silence

Silence is hard to speak about, because it is wordless. At every stage of a Godly Play session there is silence: entering, the lesson, wondering, art and material responses, the feast, and saying good-bye. A comfort with silence is taught by showing it and the felt assumption that silence is not empty but full, and can be overwhelming.

Why is the practice of silence important for children? We can force children to be silent, but it is stillness (from within) that children need if they are going to learn anything well. We can't fill a cup that is already full of noise. The ability to contemplate creates the space for filling and it is the foundation for wonder which opens the creative process, which in turn gives us life.

How to Use this Parent Page

With your child, begin by asking your child about the lesson on making silence. You might say, "I heard you made silence today in Godly Play. I wonder what part of 'making silence' you liked best?"

Just listen. This is not a time to quiz children on what they may or may not recall about the lesson, but to be quietly present as they share their own experience. This will be different for each child—one may retell much of the presentation, another recall a single moment that had meaning, and yet another talk about his or her own creative response. Again, your role is not to correct or supplement what your child tells you, but simply to listen.

Listen in a supportive way. You are supporting the formation of young—sometimes very young—theologians.

Then, if you wish, you can read with (or to) your child the condensed version of today's presentation offered below. Whether you read the lesson or simply listen as your child shares what was received in today's lesson, ask the Wondering questions printed in the left column. Remember, there are many right answers! Be open to what the presentation can mean to you and your child. God will teach you new meanings every day. Conclude by sitting quietly for a moment and then saying "Amen."

The Presentation

I wonder if we can make some silence together? I don't know, but shall we try?
Are you ready?

Let's start by sitting quietly. Can you keep your hands and your body still, like when the wind stops blowing and the waves on a lake become still? Let's see if we can be like a lake, and there are no waves.

Wondering

- **I wonder** what part of making silence you like best?
- **I wonder** what part was the most important?
- **I wonder** whether you felt God in the silence?

Now let's close our eyes. Yes. I know that feels weird, but I think it will help us to really feel the silence. This is because there is an inside as well as an outside to silence.

Sit quietly for a moment. When there is really silence you acknowledge it.

There. We did it. We made some silence. Now let's open our eyes. We made silence here, but I wonder if we can make it anywhere? Did you make silence in the church too? Where else could we make silence in our house?

Go to another room in the house and try making silence. Was it easier in the new room or harder?

Godly Play Nurturing a Child's Spiritual Life

In every Parent Page, we offer information about Godly Play to help you understand both its methodology and purpose. Today we will discuss why nurturing a child's spiritual life is crucial to their overall well-being.

Rebecca Nye writes in her book, *Children's Spirituality: What It Is and Why It Matters* that,

Children present us with so many different needs and challenges. To be told that we must be concerned for children's spirituality as well might feel like being pushed over the edge—another thing to do, another area where we don't do well enough. There are so many other compelling priorities after all.

We would argue (and Rebecca Nye would no doubt agree!) that while there are a multitude of things children need, spiritual nurture must be a priority! We often read in the news about the increasing violence and divisions in our world. We firmly believe that this is above all a spiritual crisis. What drives people to do violence to themselves or to others is a feeling that nothing really matters; a spiritual sickness of sorts. If a person has no hope, no sense of meaning and purpose, no relationship with something bigger than themselves, then striking out in anger at people all around them might feel like the only way forward. I firmly believe that Godly Play is one way (if not THE way) that we can make a difference.