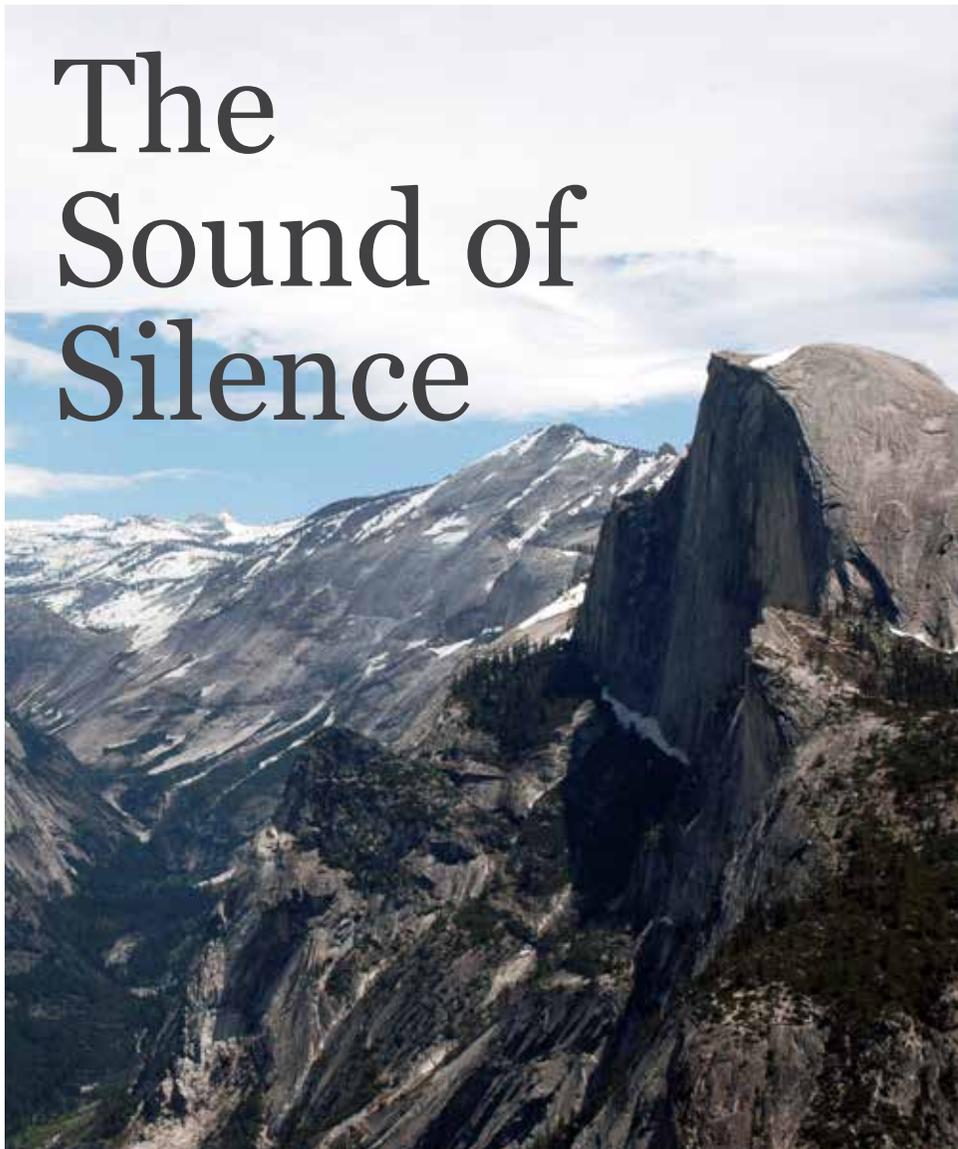


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A SHORT BOOK ON REST

# The Sound of Silence



TIMOTHY WILLARD AND JASON LOCY

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# Sweet Passage

“Forever it doesn’t matter, is only the world’s way, the give and take, the take and give we suffer in order to live.”

WENDELL BERRY

*Leavings*



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I (Tim) am the same as you. Each day I must make decisions about time management, consumption stewardship—Do I go with the Americano today or stick to my French press?—and relational connections—Should I call Jason or Mike? Each decision leads to an action, which leads to time spent, which leads to the tensions of reality. The “hurry” bombards from each direction and almost without realizing it, the weeks have passed and the rush of life has left me breathless. I’m stressed, unrested and despondent.

“The life of sensation is the life of greed,” writes Annie Dillard, “it requires more and more. The life of the spirit requires less and less; time is ample and its passage [sweet](#).” Dillard’s “life of the spirit” is far from our reality; a bygone idea. Yet the life of the spirit is one we were meant to live. We were meant to grow in wisdom, to have relationships and to experience life in all of its complexity.

But the life of the spirit is hard and requires commitment. We’re not used to the idea of “less and less.” On the contrary, we strive to do more, to acquire more and to be more. What would it mean to go against what we know, this life of greed? It means forgoing the Saturday trip to our favorite department store. It means getting off of the couch and taking a hike. It means stopping by a friend’s house unannounced just to say hello. It’s emphasizing the relational, the simple and the quiet of life. It’s all the things we used to do as kids but, for some reason, have abandoned.

I remember a time when the choices about how to maximize time were pure and innocent. A time when we knew what rest looked like without even knowing that we knew. It was found in action and friendships and ice cream.

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I remember the tire swing over Jeannie's Creek. Everyone would meet there for a long hot Saturday in the cool mountain water. I always wanted to be the first to launch off the boulders, grabbing the tire swing in mid-flight and screaming my lungs out. That was real and wet and terrifying and a knee-busting good time.

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## **But the life of the spirit is hard and requires commitment.**

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Memory makes the captured images in my mind glimmer. Hindsight does its magic, making everything better. There was more sunshine then, too. Right? I remember it flecking through the oak boughs, bouncing off the creek into a million pieces. Things took longer back then. Those afternoons at the creek felt like an eternity. Life was lived in analog—saturated with a richness that is now only shadowy nostalgia.

Friendship back then was a gift. Our shared experiences pulled us all closer to each other. We spent nights on Samantha's deck playing cards and counting the stars. If it got too late, everyone would just crash. There were no friend lists—just friends. The firefly nights at the Jigger Shop eating ice cream and sipping coffee together always left us knowing we were making memories. Tonight it's ice cream, next week live jazz on the open lawn at the winery, next week a trip to the ocean, next

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week a midnight splash in Hammer Creek off Pumping Station Road. And always there were fire nights; nights where we sat around the blazing ring just “being.”

Now it all seems so antiquated, almost a novelty. I think progress ages us faster than time. Now, it seems, we would rather sit in front of a monitor or television and consume: ads, meaningless shows, social networks, blogs, Twitter, etcetera, etcetera. We are cultural animals now; enlightened, ironic, savvy and connected. We speak a new language, one more sophisticated than the one we spoke jumping into the creek. The ideas and concepts of this new language are not compatible with the analog language of our memory. We speak and mimic what we see on the screens and only understand expressions from that context, in that same language.

Thoughts of spending a day at the creek with friends are voided out. We have too many other things to do. But we don't know what they are, really. We just know we're busy and important.

What about you? Where does your memory take you? Is that you, running through the leaves with your friends? Is that you, piling the leaves on top of yourself and laughing? Is that you, gathering more and more and more leaves because you can never have enough? Thoughts, like the leaves, begin to pile on your brain and you realize you're still that same little girl in the leaf pile, you're still that brazen little boy at the creek. You just can't see yourself. You can't see the purity of who you really are.

The memory almost convinces you. You begin to see things in a different light. You can see ... and then your phone vibrates. It's a text. You gotta go.

“And you were given  
swiftness, not for haste  
nor chiefly that you may go  
where you will, but in the  
rush of everything to waste,  
that you may have the power  
of standing still ...”

ROBERT FROST

*The Master Speed*

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I (Jason) am just like you. The hurry attacks, daily. The meetings. The emails. The conference calls. The after-school activities. If I'm not careful I will let it rob me of me, of who God made me to be. It's easy to look back at our childhood and wish the tire swings back. But I have a mortgage to pay and mouths to feed and "miles to go before I [sleep](#), and miles to go before I sleep." The last thing I want is to wake up one day and find myself surrounded by an *empire of dirt*, a collection of man-made successes and accolades, yet panting for some rest-yearning for shalom.

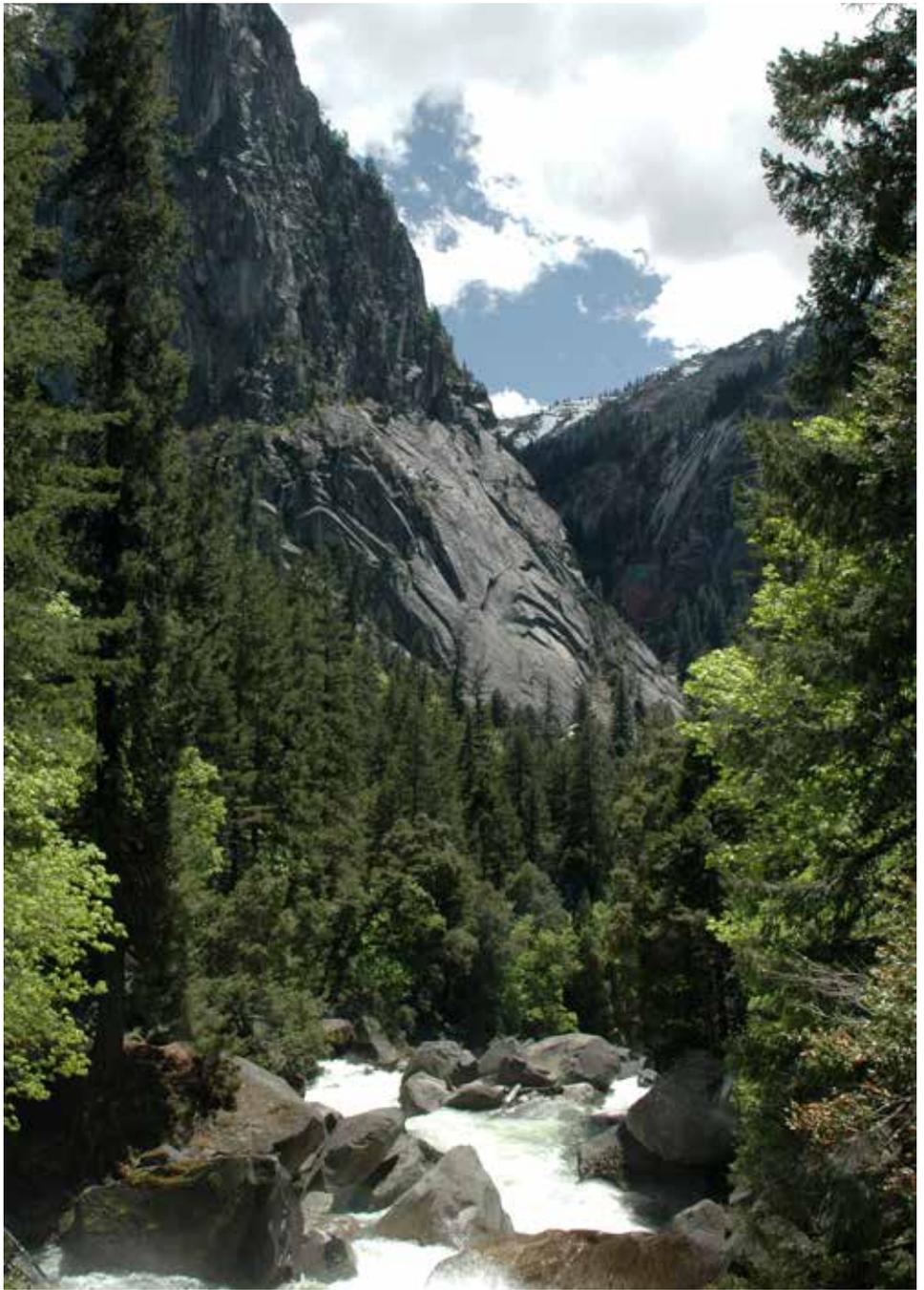
Tim and I thought we'd assemble this mini-book for you and for us, to remind us all that though the simplicity and timelessness of childhood have passed, we can still live in the joy of the moment, we can still breathe a bit slower and journey through this life with a different perspective than most people. We can live in the eternal dimension of God's rest. Remember when we used to pretend we could jump into other dimensions? Well, I do. And lately, I've been learning how to exist in God's dimension of rest. It's a bit like the tire-swing dimension, only you don't bang your knee on the rocks beneath the water.

# Finding Your Rhythm

“Holding the cup of life means looking critically at what we are living.”

HENRI NOUWEN

*Can You Drink The Cup?*



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Most of us think that rest will just happen. We'll catch a nap on Saturday or sleep in on Sunday. We'll download a popular pastor's recent sermon and pray over our coffee—praying to just hang on for this “season.” It's almost over. Then we'll get some real rest and really dial into God and all that.

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**When we Sabbath we are not taking part in mere ritual. We are joining our Heavenly Father in a place of quiet alertness. And in that rest, in that quiet, He speaks.**

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We all deal with seasons of life. But fast and furious seasons of life should not negate the rhythms of Sabbath and continual prayer in our lives. In order to keep our sanity and health and spiritual vitality, disciplined living is essential. And disciplined living begins with Sabbath rest.

What does it mean to rest in God? God rested from His creation work on the seventh day. We, therefore, should follow suit. We take time off from

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our work and do something else relaxing, or we do nothing at all. But Sabbath rest does not necessarily mean we become sedentary for a day. In fact, Sabbath rest is less something you do and more a place you go; or put another way, a way that you are. The writer of Hebrews says, “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (4:9). Israel, because of their lack of faith, did not enter into the promised land and so did not enter into God’s rest.

When we fail to enter into God’s rest, we live in rebellion and anxiety. We all know what that means for our work: stress. But when we learn to trust in God’s provision and leave our projects for a day, we find that place where God rests. It’s a place of “quiet [alertness](#),” as author Richard Foster puts it.

A Sabbath rhythm is an act of trust. It’s an active and deliberate decision to obey God, weekly. But not only weekly. You can practice Sabbath each day as you take time to retreat in your mind and heart, leaving space for reflection upon God’s Word, expressing thanks for His provision, asking Him to be your teacher daily and trusting in Him as your friend.

Too easily we crowd our schedules with our dreams and to-do lists. These are not bad in and of themselves. But they become bad when they become our idols. When was the last time you took a real Sabbath? Took a hike? Played with your kids all day? Had early morning breakfast with your spouse? Spent an afternoon reading the Scriptures, confessing and giving thanks? Took a real break from your work to enjoy God?

“I sat under His shadow with  
great delight, and His fruit  
was sweet to my taste.”

ANDREW MURRAY

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Sabbath rest not only helps us regain our physical composure and focus on God, it also allows us to finally listen to His voice. More than anything, this has challenged and encouraged Jason and me the most. When I rest during each weekday, taking time for silent prayer and just breathing, I am truly able to hear His voice more clearly. When I get to my Sabbath day and find myself playing with my girls or fumbling around my truck engine, I hear God more clearly. These times are not always times of great epiphany either. Often they are times of confession and conviction—when His truth bears down on me, crushing me. Once, I faced a ten-hour travel day from Belfast to Atlanta with an L.A. trip waiting just a day after my return to the south. So I rose early and walked to Queens University in the Northern Ireland rain. I was winded and tired, but the time with God was sweet; full of “Thank You” and praise as the blue glow of the morning swelled. What a way to start the day!

When we Sabbath we are not taking part in mere ritual. We are joining our Heavenly Father in a place of quiet alertness. And in that rest, in that quiet, He speaks.

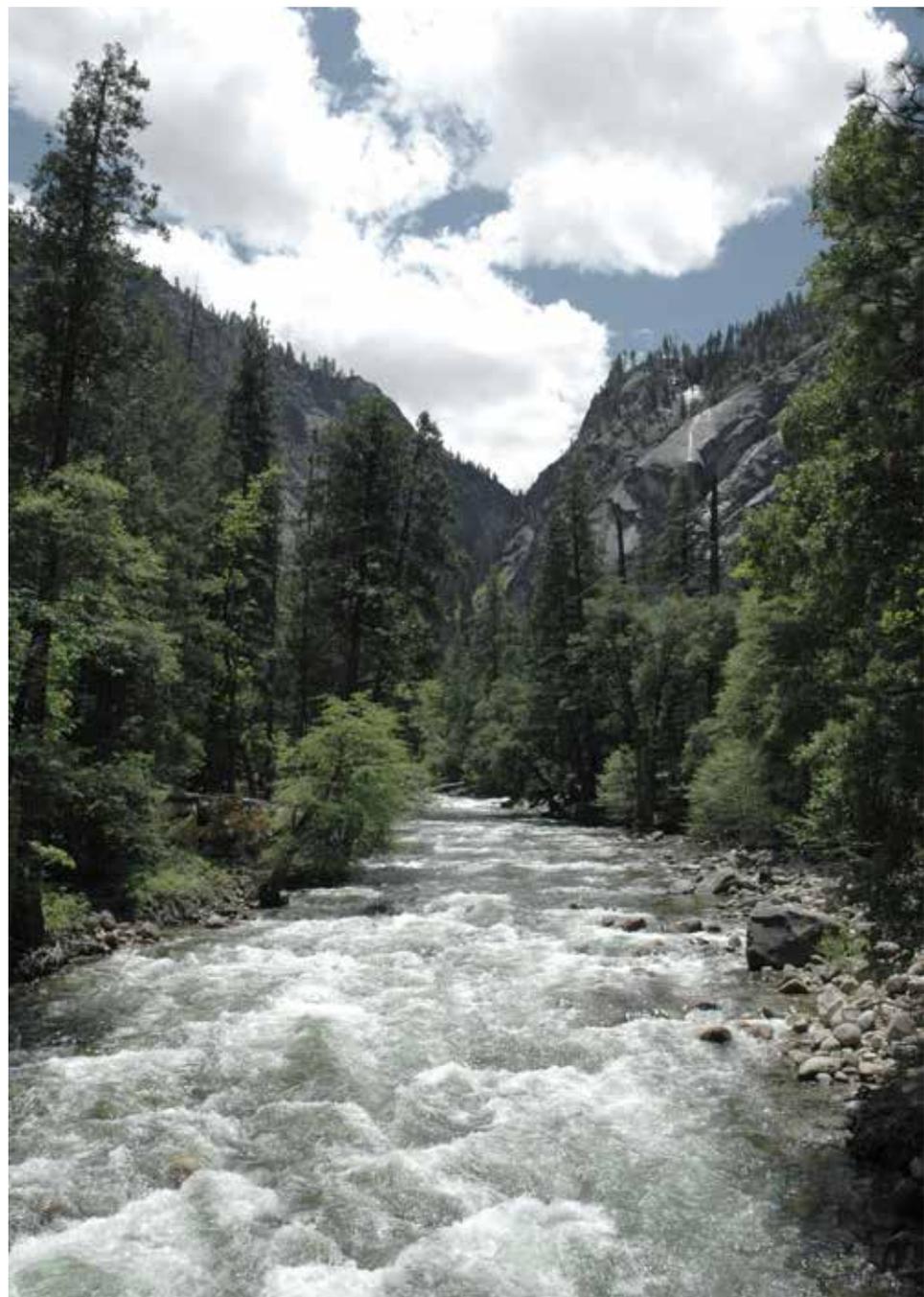
Scholars say that when God rested on the seventh day it was not an actual twenty-four hour day. Rather, it continues even now. God is still in Sabbath, and He is waiting for us. We can join Him now in the temporal each day, each week, as we look forward to the time when we will enter into His eternal rest—the restoration of all things.

# From Obstacles to Abiding

“Lord, in thy Spirit’s hurricane,  
I pray, Strip my soul naked—dress it  
then thy way.”

GEORGE MACDONALD

*Diary of an Old Soul*



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For some, the act of Sabbath rest feels awkward. It might fall into that “ritual” space. Or perhaps the I-Thou relationship has become estranged. Whatever the case for our awkwardness with Jesus, the best way to fix it is to understand what it means to abide in Christ.

In John 15:4-9, Jesus said to His disciples:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.

If we want to get to the heart of abiding, we must cultivate intimacy, and intimacy begins with connectivity. To connect means to form a relationship. Connecting to another person, to our friends and family, requires effort for sure, especially in an age in which people are reduced to profiles and status updates. But we need to do more than simply make connections; we need to stay connected. The vine in Jesus’ analogy reveals the depth to which our intimacy must run.

“The man who has no inner  
life is the slave of his  
surroundings.”

HENRI-FRÉDÉRIC AMIEL

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When we become estranged in our relationships they wither, like the branches on the vine.

Abiding is staying connected with God and others, not losing the bond that created the deep relationship. Staying connected to God requires us to seek Him in His Word and to listen for Him throughout our day. Think through the actual times of quiet and stillness in your day. Now think through the times of organized chaos and busyness and overall insanity. It's the same for all of us. Staying connected with God in today's veneered world might mean waking up an hour earlier than normal to sit in silence. It might mean setting up monthly spiritual retreats, finding a place of solitude and just being.

Relationships, like the branch to the vine, need attending and patience and even pruning. Relationships demand our time and attention. They demand selfless interaction. When we neglect our relationships, as when we neglect the growing vine, disease and decay settle in. We become distant from one another, quick to seat resentment in our hearts, quick to allow bitterness to seep into our relational roots. And we struggle to separate our relational failings on earth with our ideas about God. If we're not careful, estrangement from God can settle in, and life can take on a cold pragmatism. Birth and death, gain and loss—we find ourselves sitting with the ancients eating and drinking, looking toward death.

But this is where the immensity of Jesus overwhelms the world. In a conversation with a Samaritan woman, Jesus refers to Himself as “living water,” a life-giving source, satisfying the divine thirst inside everyone. As the

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world spins toward oblivion, raging on in an ever-echoing toast to “get all you can,” Jesus Himself flows into our lives, misting our souls with His presence. He surges deep into our anxious thoughts and notions, giving life. We can hear

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**If we want to get to the heart of abiding, we must cultivate intimacy, and intimacy begins with connectivity. To connect means to form a relationship.**

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the language of God in these living waters, the mysterious language coursing through our dry insides. What if we would allow ourselves to be caught in His flash flood of life? Would we swim for dry land, or would we allow Him to carry us further into Himself? If we allow Him to carry us into Himself, we discover that His life-giving waters never dry up. These waters power us—enabling us to live always abiding—even drowning—in Him.

The overwhelming flood that is Jesus produces a spiritual crop in us from which characteristics like patience grows and flourishes. Like a lover waiting

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for her beloved, we learn to wait for Him. Perseverance springs forth as well, made hardy from life's tumult, pushing us to cling to the Vine. Our roots deepen, giving us the strength to live as an expression of Him. We are forever connected to Him, a connection that produces a life that climbs and weaves and blossoms, one that offers the fragrance of divine intimacy.

# Not in the Wind

“And they write innumerable  
books, being too vain and distracted  
for silence.”

T.S. ELIOT



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*Why do we need to abide, really? What's so important about entering into God's rest? I like the chaos and the busy-ness, you think. Do we really need to seek silence to do all of this?*

We're not saying you need to sell all your stuff and become a mystic in order to experience rest with God. We're not saying that to abide with Christ you have to be a hermit. But we are saying that if you want to really hear God, if you want to really experience the fullness of His joy, then you will need to take a different path than the world offers. That much is clear.

Come with us to Mount Horeb, the mount of God, where we find the prophet Elijah hiding in a cave in fear for his life. God tells him to stand at the mouth of the cave, for He was about to pass by. It's at this point that we read a most beautiful and haunting passage.

And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. (1 Kings 19:11-12 Esv).

What we're seeing in this passage is called a theophany, a visible manifestation of God to a human being. In the ancient Near East, theophanies was connected to battle. It was believed that the warrior gods would use thunderbolts

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(lightning or fire), the stormwind and the trembling earth to fight for their people, terrifying the enemy. Baal, in particular, is pictured as holding a handful of thunderbolts. So, it was believed in that culture that the gods operated and communicated by way of instilling terror into their enemies with tempestuous natural elements.

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## **... God does not work in the ways that make sense in our culture.**

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Theologians suggest that Yahweh is also viewed as a warrior god in that He fights for His people. But as always Yahweh has His own counter-cultural way of communicating. Unlike the ancient Near East gods who never articulated a plan for their so-called cultural involvement, Yahweh operated with a grand plan.

But the point in our discussion is not what God's plan was per se. Rather, it is how Yahweh communicated His plan to His people. This brings us to the mouth of the cave where Elijah stood. He stood there because God told him that He was about to pass by, He was going to reveal His plan to Elijah. God was going to communicate with Elijah. This awesome passing of God gives us insight into how God talks to us, right here and now.

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When God passes by Elijah, three elements precede His actual passing: the stormwind, an earthquake and a fire. Sound familiar? These are the very elements through which the ancient Near East gods were supposed to speak. And God uses them, but He's not in any of it! Instead, a fourth element follows: "the sound of a low whisper." The Esv rendering here is strikingly close to the Hebrew meaning. This phrase is not describing the sound of God's voice, as if it was like a gentle whisper.

Elijah hears the sound of silence.

The prophet encounters God's plan and direction not from the bombastic language of the ancient Near East gods, the language of culture, but from silence, literally.

There are two applications we can take from Elijah's brief encounter.

First, God does not work in the ways that make sense in our culture. In fact, they look—or in this case sound—completely different from what culture offers. Second, in order to hear God's direction in our lives we need to cultivate space so that we can linger in the silence of God. We may expect Him to communicate His plan in our common cultural mode, but this is not reality.

In the book of Mark we see Jesus Himself, on multiple occasions (Mark 1:19-39; 3:7-12; 6:30-56), pursuing a quiet place to pray. In chapter six we see Jesus experiencing a full day of teaching, feeding the five thousand and eventually

“The moment we make up our minds that we are going on with this determination to exalt God over all, we step out of the world’s parade. We shall find ourselves out of adjustment to the ways of the world, and increasingly so as we make progress in the holy way.”

A.W. TOZER

*The Pursuit of God*

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walking on water in the middle of the night. But, wedged in between those events Mark records that, “After he had taken leave of them [the disciples], he went up on the mountain to pray” (1:4-6).

The ultimate prayer scene with Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane. Think about the circumstances. Jesus leaves with His closest friends to a quiet place in the middle of the night. Jesus leaves His friends and goes further into the garden to pray in the quiet and the shadows. Once alone He pours out His supplication to His Father. He asks for another way out of this whole dying for sinners situation—He asks not to have to die.

Before the biggest day of His life, where do we find Jesus? On His knees, sweating blood in a quiet place, praying.

It’s in the silence that Jesus seeks God’s face.

It’s in the silence that Jesus approaches the biggest event of His life.

It’s in the silence that Jesus gathers strength for the cross.

This is the silence He calls us to. This is the silence after the stormwind and the earthquake and the fire—the language of the culture. This is the context by which God reveals His direction for our lives. This is the context we see Jesus cultivating throughout His ministry. And this is the context from which Jesus gathered strength to face the insurmountable.

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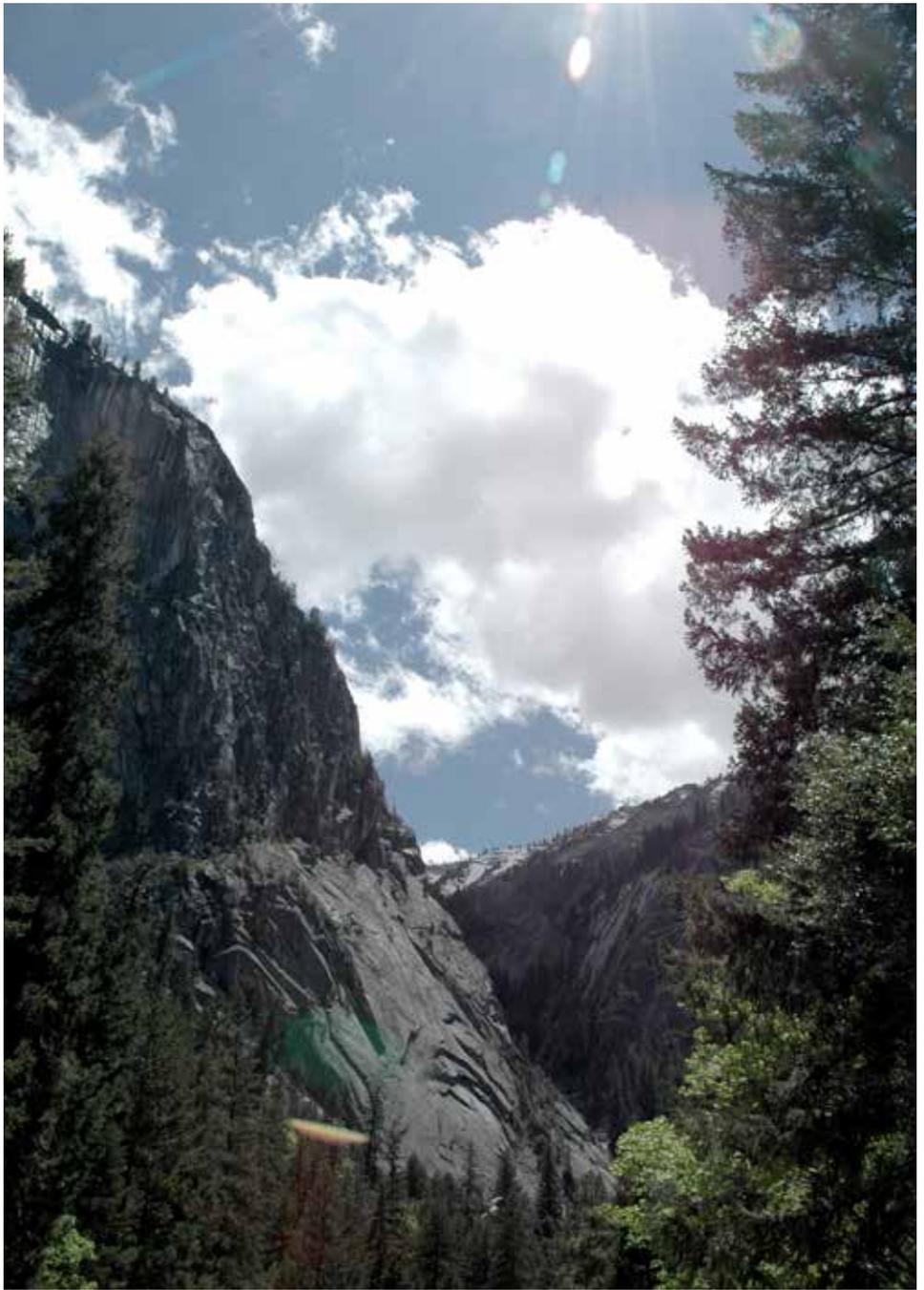
Our culture has a way of drawing us into its *modus operandi*. Almost without knowing it we expect God to work the way culture works—fast and opulent and obvious. But if we carry this expectation, we show our hand and belie our own shallow understanding of God and how He works and communicates. We get so entrenched in the cultural language and so dialed in to the speed and immediacy that our childlike faith disappears. Instead, we wield an adult religion that falls vacant on our hearts and has little impact on the lives around us.

What will it take to get to that place of silence where we can actually find direction from God? What will it take to shed the culture and begin a new way of living, one marked by silence, childlike and new every morning?

# A Study Companion

“In quietness and trust is your strength ...”

ISAIAH 30:15



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# Reflection

Think of a time in your life where the pace felt simpler. What about that time felt different? Why was it simpler? How old were you? What did you do with your time?

Now, imagine your life in the present as it compares to that time. Contrast the two. What is different now?

Once your mental exercise is over, take 15 minutes and sit in silence. Reflect on your life now and the areas in which you feel stretched too thin. Put these areas in front of God and ask Him to guide your days to align with His ways.

Spend some time evaluating your relationship with Jesus. Are you pursuing direction in His silence? Or are you making your own plans and prospering yourself without inquiring of Him? What cultural obstacles are keeping you from hearing the voice of God?

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# Discussion

With your good friend or spouse talk through the following topics and questions.

Do I lead a balanced life?

Where in my life do you see room to decrease activities?

If I were to cut back on the amount of commitments I take on, what are some negative consequences?

How can I be held accountable in this area?

Has my family become an idol in that I've pulled away from church involvement because of my home schedule?

How well do I steward my leisure time?

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# Application

On a piece of paper, map out your week starting with Sunday and working through Saturday. In each day, write out your basic responsibilities and time commitment for each. For example, you might have Sunday listed as:

Church: *2 hours*

Lunch with family: *1 hour*

Household chores: *2 hours*

Down time: *1 hour*

Once you complete the entire week, look for natural rhythms to your time. What do you see?

Is your time staccatoed, with lots of little things occupying your days? Is your week full of the reverb of too much activity? Or, does your week ebb and flow with work and rest and family and friends?

Take time and restructure your calendar, working to eliminate distractions. Experiment with several calendars and options. Be extreme! See what a week looks like at the bare minimum. Now, create a calendar that maxes you out. Imagine yourself in each scenario.

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Once you are done, experiment with several of your calendars over the course of the next several weeks and see which feels comfortable to you.

In your journal, write a short prayer (or Scripture) that you can memorize and repeat throughout the weeks ahead as you become tempted to let clutter fill your calendar.

In the end, we want you to find an order to your week that couples God's intended design for you along with your desires. In this space you will find rest.

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# Further Reading

*Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God*

**DALLAS WILLARD**

*Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*

**RICHARD FOSTER**

*Confessions*

**AUGUSTINE**

*Veneer: Living Deeply In A Surface Society*

**TIMOTHY WILLARD & JASON LOCY**

*Can You Drink The Cup*

**HENRI NOUWEN**

*Christian Discourses: The Lilies of the Field & the Birds of Air*

**SOREN KIERKEGAARD**

*Intimacy With The Almighty*

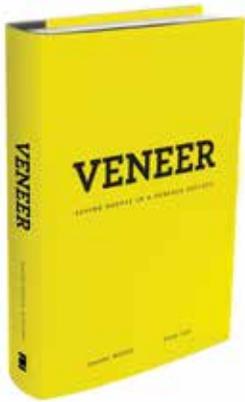
**CHARLES R. SWINDOLL**

# Living Deeply

“The firmament kept you from the fear,  
silence brought you near, as it was.”

ERIC OWYOUNG  
*Future of Forestry*





# VENEER

LIVING DEEPLY IN A SURFACE SOCIETY

BY TIMOTHY WILLARD AND JASON LOCY

[Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

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“When I put down this book, I felt seen, heard, and not crazy. That’s about the highest compliment I can give. *Veneer* asked me to look at the truth about myself—consumerism, celebrity-gawking, the temptation to give people a curated-and-manufactured Facebook profile version of myself. And then it reminded me of a better way: deep relationships, intimacy, face-to-face connections, honesty even when it’s ugly. It reminded me how I want to live.”

SHAUNA NIEQUIST Author of *Bittersweet*

“The more I read *Veneer*, the more I wanted to keep reading. The writing is refreshingly winsome, passionate and theologically astute. Willard and Locy drive us toward the knowledge and magnificence of God as the antidote to the superficial religious cloak of “self” love and image management so common in the veneer of today’s religious expression. Compelling, fascinating, challenging—*Veneer* gives you permission to be you.”

CHIP INGRAM Author and President of Living on the Edge

“Bold, intelligent and convicting. Even as culture rewards our masks, *Veneer* urges us to rip them off. The life we ought to live is identified on these pages. Only read if you are ready to shed your façade.”

GABE LYONS Q Founder and Author of *The Next Christians*

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AVAILABLE WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD



**TIMOTHY WILLARD** had reasons to leave his faith behind. As a pastor's kid, he saw the church he adored divided into pieces and soon after, experienced his own reckoning when he was abruptly expelled from a prominent Christian university. But this story would have a twist. The next 17 years would galvanize his passion for the church. He would tour the country as a musician, teach students around bonfires, write full-time, and earn a masters in religion specializing in Christian Thought from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

**JASON LOCY** has always seen a divided religion. Growing up in a small southern town, he experienced firsthand a faith disconnected from society. Over time he would realize there should be no divide; all of life is sacred. Now, Jason embodies this philosophy as a sought-after creative director and principal of FiveStone, an award-winning branding and design firm that moves organizations from standard marketing hype to long-term sustainable strategies. His work has garnered national and international attention.

Tim lives somewhere north of Atlanta with his enchanting wife Christine and pixie daughters Lyric, Brielle and Zion. Jason lives in a tiny apartment in Brooklyn, NY with his winsome wife Heather and four boisterous children Ethan, Christian, Naomi and Eliana.

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[www.TimothyWillard.com](http://www.TimothyWillard.com)  
[@timothywillard](https://twitter.com/timothywillard)

[www.JasonLocy.com](http://www.JasonLocy.com)  
[@jasonlocy](https://twitter.com/jasonlocy)

[www.EndVeneer.com](http://www.EndVeneer.com)  
[@EndVeneer](https://twitter.com/EndVeneer)

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# Notes

## CHAPTER ONE

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“The life of sensation is the life of greed,” writes Annie Dillard, “it requires more and more. The life of the spirit requires less and less; time is ample and its passage sweet”

*The Writing Life*, Annie Dillard (HarperPerennial, 1990), 32-33.

“miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.”

*Complete Poems of Robert Frost*, Robert Frost (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York 1964), 275.

## CHAPTER TWO

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“quiet alertness”

*Prayer*, Richard Foster (HarperSanFrancisco: New York), 95-96.

# The Sound of Silence

TIMOTHY WILLARD & JASON LOCY

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Author Photo of Jason Locy: Andy Brophy

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