

~ Adult Faith Reflection Exercise ~

12. Lent: Desert Spirituality

Environment Suggestions: prayer table, cactus, sand, rocks, etc. A candle, Bible, strips of sackcloth and purple cloth will indicate the Lenten season.

Introduction:

Scripture gives us the account of the experience of Jesus in the desert for 40 days. This image of the desert as a place to go to in solitude, to fast, and to face challenges is a wonderful analogy for our own spiritual discernment during the Lenten season.

Opening Hymn: Come Back to Me (Hosea) CBW II and III

Opening Prayer:

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Loving God, as we journey these 40 days of Lent, give us the courage to truly enter the desert. Let Your spirit enable us to face our own demons—our self doubt, our fear of refection or failure, our hesitation to love fully and our insecurity in our faith. We know that You are with us throughout our lives, for every Lenten journey and every renewal of our hearts. For this, we give our thanks. *Amen*

Scripture:

(Mk 1:12–13; Lk 4:1–13)

The Temptation of Jesus

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards He was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But He answered, “It is written, ‘One does 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 and placed Him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command His angels concerning You,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear You up, so that You will not dash Your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him.’” Then the devil left Him, and suddenly angels came and waited on Him.

The Gospel of the Lord

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence:

Faith Sharing with Guiding Questions:

1. In the crazy pace of our existence, can ‘*desert spirituality*’ be helpful in bringing you closer to Jesus?

2. What can your 'fast' look like for this Lenten season? What would be most spiritually empowering? What is the clutter in your living, where can fasting and cleansing make a difference in your faith? The desert is quiet and challenging.
3. Take a moment to reflect on the role of silence in your life. Are you taking the time to allow silence to speak in your heart?

Further reference for 'desert spirituality' from the website below:

<http://duluthbenedictines.org/2011/03/16/desert-spirituality-silence-solitude-simplicity/>

Read the article below by Richard Rohr. In your small group, discuss what points in the article speak to your own need for silence. How do some of these ideas speak to your own need for spiritual renewal?

Silence:

"How do you approach the thirst of Jesus? Only one secret—the closer you come to Jesus, the better you will know His thirst. Jesus thirsts even now, in your heart and in the poor—He knows your weakness, He wants only your love, wants only the chance to love you."

Mother Teresa

Closing Prayer:

God of beginning and end, give us the wisdom of the desert to shed our false selves, to renew our hearts and to move into a promised land of a deeper relationship with you. We make this prayer through Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. *Amen*

† In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn:

Hosea (Come Back to Me)

For Further Reflection and Discussion:

Finding God in the Depths of Silence by [Richard Rohr](#) | [March 2013](#) from 'Sojourners'

Real interior silence, not just the absence of noise, is a foundational spiritual discipline. So why are we so resistant to enter into it?

Probably more than ever, because of iPads, cell phones, billboards, TVs, and iPods, we are a toxically over-stimulated people. Only time will tell the deep effects of this on emotional maturity, relationship, communication, conversation, and religion itself. Silence now seems like a luxury, but it is not so much a luxury as it is a choice and decision at the heart of every spiritual discipline and growth. Without it, most liturgies, Bible studies, devotions, "holy" practices, sermons, and religious conversations might be good and fine, but they will never be truly great or life-changing—for ourselves or for others. They can only represent the surface; God is always found at the depths, even the depths of our sin and brokenness. And in the depths, it is silent.

It comes down to this: God is, and will always be, Mystery. Only a non-arguing presence, only a non-assertive self, can possibly have the humility and honesty to receive such mysterious silence. When you can remain at peace inside of your own mysterious silence, you are only beginning to receive the immense "Love that moves the sun and the other stars," as Dante so beautifully says—

along with the immeasurable silent space between those trillions of stars, through which this Mystery is also choosing to communicate. Silence is space, and space beyond time. Those who learn to live there are spacious and timeless people. They make and leave room for all the rest of us.

Richard Rohr, OFM, a Sojourners contributing editor, is founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation (www.cacradicalgrace.org) in Albuquerque, N.M.