

A Battle for Silence

You're at an airport, waiting for a flight. It's the end of a rough day, and you're stressed, and for some reason you don't want to watch the TVs blaring the latest crisis on FoxNews, or listen to "Call Me Maybe" over the loudspeakers, or answer the 97 emails that just popped up in your inbox. You find yourself fighting against all of the hustle and bustle happening around you, because you want... not all of that. You're struggling to get rid of all of the noise and business, and you just know that you're missing something... What's missing?

My answer to that question is silence, because I think that there is a lack of silence in our world. Now many can say that there is no such thing as "true" silence, there will always be some sort of sound in our lives, like breathing, an annoying sibling, a Yankee fan. I would disagree. I don't have a fancy definition, but I know silence when I see it. It's the time right after I strike out in a baseball game, or the seconds before starting that big final exam, or even the moment of internal suspense right before that goat bleats in that wacky YouTube video. But, silence and I don't always get along. We have a bit of a give and take relationship you see. Sometimes I'll eagerly find it while lying down on a hammock with 8 little cousins bouncing and yelling up and down on me. Other times, I'll do anything to avoid it, even watch soap advertisements while playing online RISK 10 hours straight.

We usually avoid silence as much as possible, because, frankly, it often makes us face the enemies we fear most in our lives. It's during the silence at a raging party

that we remember the death of a loved one; and our self-doubt and wall of failures well up while we wait for a big interview or test.

But. Silence is a weapon, if used properly. Silence shows us our allies, and it unites us. We know better in silent moments than any other that person who we can't live without, who can bear an obsessive compulsion to watch Padres baseball games at 3:00 in the morning, or can handle the screaming matches over who gets the railroads during a simple Monopoly game, or deal with any other idiosyncrasy we may have. And it's in those silent moments of pain and self-doubt that we realize whom we are willing to pester in the dead of the night, and know that they will be there for us. Silence brings our greatest friends to the front line of our battles.

Silence also unites us in a very powerful and extraordinary way. I witnessed that power on a journey two years ago. I was in Spain, Summer 2011, for a get together for youths around the world to meet the pope and celebrate life. We all gathered at a large airport, more than 2 million people from 193 different nations, just for this one big night. It was quite a sight, seeing the Brazilians break dancing to a beat laid down by African bongo drummers, cheered on by rowdy Italians, shouting heartily as usual, all to a scene painted with the colors of flags from all over the world. All of these festivities, dancing, singing, greeting fellow wonderful human beings led up to the big moment, the pope standing to speak! He was interrupted by an enormous thunderstorm, which made all of us cheer all the louder, 2 million people all shouting in unison in their own unique way! And I thought that was the coolest darn thing!

Until... the most powerful moment hit. The speech the pope was supposed to give was never given, no special phrase, no, not a single word. After all of the cheering and play, the pope called for a period of silence. And, suddenly, among a group of over 2 million people, you could hear a pin drop. I heard, for the first time in my life, the entire world speaking one single language. And I understood.

I will never, for the rest of my life, underestimate that power silence wields. And that is why I urge you all to bring silence into your battles in life. Sure, it can be uncomfortable, and it frequently leaves us with nothing but ourselves to face. And that's frightening. But silence can also bring forward truth. It can offer understanding. It can reveal awe-inspiring beauty. It can defeat our enemies. It can send us our allies, it can break down walls, it can stop armies, it can