

SILENCE & WITHDRAWAL. . .

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Greenleaf writes: *One must not be afraid of a little **silence**. ...It is often a devastating question to ask oneself – but it is sometimes important to ask it – “In saying what I have in mind will I really improve on the silence?”*

*...The ability to **withdraw** and reorient oneself, if only for a moment, presumes that one has learned the art of systematic neglect, to sort out the more important from the less important – and the important from the urgent – and attend to the more important...*

Pacing oneself by appropriate withdrawal is one of the best approaches to making optimal use of one’s resources. The servant-as-leader must constantly ask: *How can I use myself to serve best?*

Each of the great wisdom figures and wisdom traditions speaks of the importance of silence – avoiding the external noise and quieting our internal noise. Silence is a major tap root that nurtures the hungry heart. Today, more than ever before in history, we humans are moment-to-moment being washed over by a tsunami of noise (external noise and internal noise). Silence does not bring us comfort – or so it seems – we become more and more anxious when we experience ‘silence’. Greenleaf’s question continues to challenge me, support me, and indict me for too often the silence is not improved when I speak. *When do you, Gentle Reader, seek ‘silence’? How often do you seek ‘silence’?*

Silence and Withdrawal are intertwining tap roots for me. ‘Silent-Withdrawal’ is a tap-root that I, again too often, fail to nurture so that they can nurture me. When I do take the time to nurture these tap roots and when I then take the time to allow them to nurture me I find that I am able to develop more fully *‘the art of systematic neglect.’* More importantly, for me, I am able to withdraw from the external noise and to quiet my noisy heart (the internal noise that is more distracting and debilitating than the external noise).

I know that ‘pacing’ is crucial – and, again, knowing this does not mean that practice will easily follow. When I choose *‘Silence & Withdrawal’* and integrate these with *‘pacing’* I find that I shoot less from the lip, I find that I am less likely to be distracted by noise (especially by my noisy heart), and that I am more likely to be able to separate the important from the urgent – and respond to the important rather than simply react to the urgent. For me, one of the internal noises that hinders my pacing rooted in ‘silence-withdrawal’ is anxiety. When I ‘give-in’ to my anxiety I am reactive not response-able. My pacing dramatically increases as I shun silence-withdrawal in favor of ‘fixing’ and ‘doing.’ Gentle Reader, what is one of your internal noises that hinders you from embracing the disciplines of *‘Silence-Withdrawal-Pacing’*

Greenleaf provides us the three tap-roots: *Silence, Withdrawal* and *Pacing*. The rest is up to us.

Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom. –Frances Bacon