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My Supernatural Radio Matt Litton

Kurt Vonnegut has a great science fiction short story, "Harrison Bergeron," in which the characters wear ear pieces that essentially keep them from thinking about anything for too long. "Every 20 seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some type of sharp noise to keep people like George [father of the main character] from taking unfair advantage of their brains." As I read Vonnegut's story, I began to cogitate on the noise levels I allow into my life. There are many studies on the health consequences of prolonged exposure to sound. Elevated and sustained noise causes hearing impairment, ischemic heart disease, hypertension, annoyance and sleep disturbance. I wonder if we shouldn't add "spiritual disconnection" to the list of ailments attributed to noise. From mornings in the car when I feel compelled to play my iPod or listen to the radio, to the moments alone when I elect to be on my cell—texting, talking, Facebooking—I have learned that encountering quiet is indeed a difficult discipline in 21st century life. I've heard many friends articulate that they don't believe God actually speaks to people any more, and I know there are platforms and church doctrines that address the same issue. As I finished reading "Harrison Bergeron," I had to wonder: Does He really not speak anymore, or do we have the volume turned up so loud in our lives that we can't hear Him? Maybe God is speaking to us and we just aren't tuned in.

I'm working through *The Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard Foster, right now with some friends, and have spent a great deal of time focusing on the "Meditation" chapter. Foster begins the chapter ruminating on the absence of quiet in our culture. Speaking on Christian meditation in general, Foster says, "Inward fellowship of this kind transforms the inner personality. We cannot burn the eternal flame of the inner sanctuary and remain the same, for the divine fire will consume everything that is impure." I've been encouraged to hear that some of those in my group have experienced the "divine fire" through silent meditation. In the Bible, Jesus consistently chose quiet solitude to bask in the presence of the Father. One friend commented that his meditation on Scripture before prayer had progressed in a way that led to some humbling moments before God. Most of us, though, are experiencing the struggles of the discipline and the challenges presented by the clamor in our lives. My radio, my television, my latest iPod purchase and my precious cell phone leave little time for quiet reflection and little space to get alone before God to listen.

Although it's not a major theme, I believe the genius of Vonnegut's short story is the idea that the prevalence of noise and distraction "handicaps" us. The tsunami of sound and distraction can be so overwhelming in 2008, I can't imagine what it might be like in 2081 (the setting of his story). I'm realizing a process that began in my search to find the discipline to meditate has also illustrated the spiritual and holistic need for silence in my everyday life. I'm not attempting to handicap God here—I've had some divine moments on long jogs with my iPod ear buds securely planted in my ears and blaring away, but I'm laboring to use the "off" button a little more these days and instill a healthy dose of quiet into my daily routine.

This expedition for quiet has begun on my daily traverse to work. It's been an arduous venture. Not to go completely *Screwtape Letters* on you, but I inexplicably crave noise and distraction in my mornings—it's a powerful and suspicious compulsion that I must consistently ward off with prayer. The brilliant reality is that at times, I've experienced the divine fire in the silence of my car, and the more time I spend in hushed reflection before God, the more I see humanity the way He does. I'm finding more patience and grace in my everyday life. I'm focusing less on my needs and more on the needs of others. With this daily measure of quiet, I move to a completely different rhythm than the rest of the world—and it's much different than the cadence emanating from our "earpieces." God is like a supernatural radio station, just waiting for us to find the discipline and the quiet to tune in.

