

A QUIET PLACE

How to Create a Space of Grace



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HELLO, FRIEND!

I'll be honest with you. There was a season in my life when I dreamed of escaping to a little cabin on a lake in Minnesota. A cabin without internet access. Where there's only earth and sky, water and trees. Where the air is clear and you can actually hear the rustling of leaves. But I don't have an internet-free cabin close to the Canadian border. For the past two-and-a-half decades, I have lived 20 miles from downtown Los Angeles, planted amid the massive urban-to-suburban sprawl.

Noise was constant. Not only from the leaf blowers and car horns outside. But also from the phones and other electronic devices inside! And all that incessant noise began to take a toll. At first it was hard to describe, but slowly, I noticed the way noise impacts our bodies, our minds, and even our souls.

When we're surrounded by noise, it's as if our souls have a slow leak and we can feel our energy ebbing away.

And I know I'm not alone.

Do you feel unusually tired and you can't quite pinpoint the source of your exhaustion? Has your social media feed sometimes felt like anything but social? Are you weary from all the conflict and outrage that pervades Twitter threads and other online formats? Do you ever experience a sense of restlessness deep within you? Do you sometimes wish you could log off forever?

A few years ago, I would have answered, "Yes, to all of the above!" In many ways, though, it was part of my job to be online, but it left me just plain tired. I was eager to eliminate the noise from my "online life," as well as my "real life," so I learned how to cultivate a sanctuary of quiet while living in one of the largest—and loudest—metropolitan areas in the world.

To do this, I became very intentional about creating a space of quiet solace. Because we aren't helpless against a loud, raucous world. There are many things we can do! In fact, I've written a book about it! It's called *Sanctuary*, and you can order a copy at the URL below.

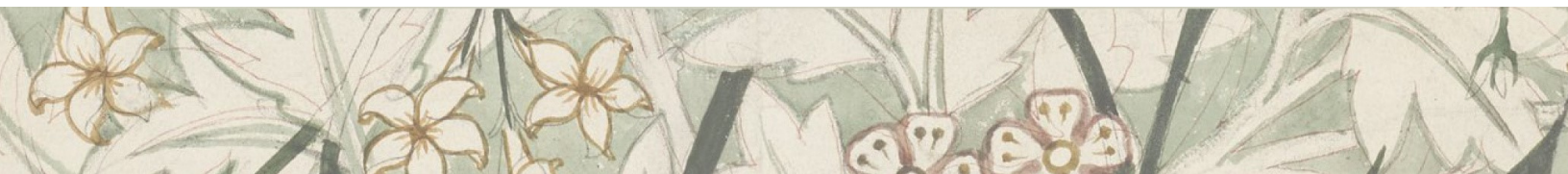
But for now, one of the best remedies for an overwrought and too-tired heart is to create your very own space of grace.

A place where you can slow down and breathe deep.

A place where you can hear yourself think.

A place where you can begin to feel like yourself again.

And it doesn't have to cost a fortune either!





THE BENEFITS OF QUIET SOLITUDE

In today's hyper-connected world, it has become increasingly difficult for anyone to carve out some time for a little peace and quiet in our jam-packed schedules. True solitude has become something of a lost art. And yet, time to think, process, and unwind is essential to our physical, emotional, and spiritual health. This is true for everyone, not just introverts or those who especially enjoy "quiet time alone."

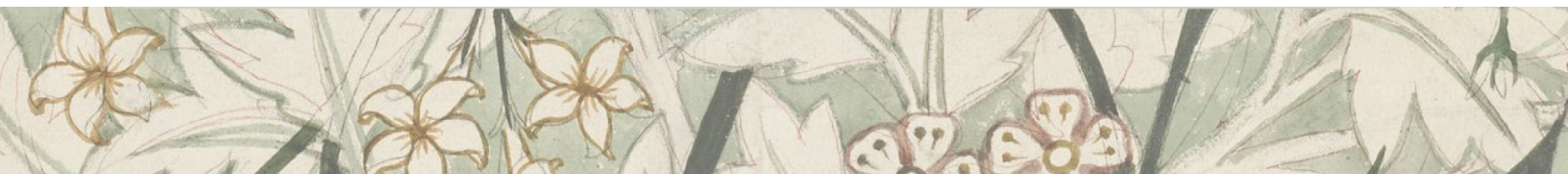
Solitude is not antisocial or a mere preference for self-serving isolation; rather, a brief period of quiet accomplishes several things:

1. A time of quiet gives us permission to downshift into a lower gear, which helps to restore us physically, mentally, and spiritually.
1. A time of quiet increases our creativity by giving our minds time to explore new ideas.
2. A time of quiet increases our productivity by reducing distractions.
3. A time of quiet enables us to process our experiences and achieve greater clarity about them.
4. A time of quiet allows our minds to consider potential solutions without external pressure.
5. A time of quiet creates the space we need to consider and articulate our convictions.
6. A time of quiet is one of the best ways to connect with God through Scripture and prayer.
7. A time of quiet allows us to return to our loved ones, refreshed and able to love and serve them better.

This is so important to remember: The purpose of seeking brief respites of solitude is not for the sake of time alone itself. We seek a period of time away so we can return a healthier version of ourselves to better serve those we love. If we're to experience the fullness of all life has to offer, periodic times of quiet must be pursued with intention.

Jesus is our primary example of the need to seek time away. During his earthly life, he continuously pursued time alone so he could pray, be refilled, and then return to the many people who sought him for healing and teaching. He often rose early in the morning to have this time alone (Mark 1:35), and he liked to finish a busy day by retreating in the evenings to a private place (Matthew 14:23). This was his pattern—to withdraw someplace quiet—especially before and after he spent a day with a large crowd of people (Luke 5:16).

Today, we can follow his example. And one of the things I've learned is that I am much more likely to experience intentional times of quiet when I have an actual place where I can go to experience the quiet my heart so desperately needs.





CREATING A SPACE OF GRACE

As a kid I loved spending time in my bedroom. It was my private refuge where I could savor the uninterrupted quiet of my books and craft projects. But that's not really been possible as an adult. More often than not, I haven't had a spare room in my house to turn into a "quiet room," and yet, I have always designated one corner in my home as my personal retreat. It's where I could go whenever I needed a few moments to collect my thoughts and reorient my feelings. I've called it my "space of grace."

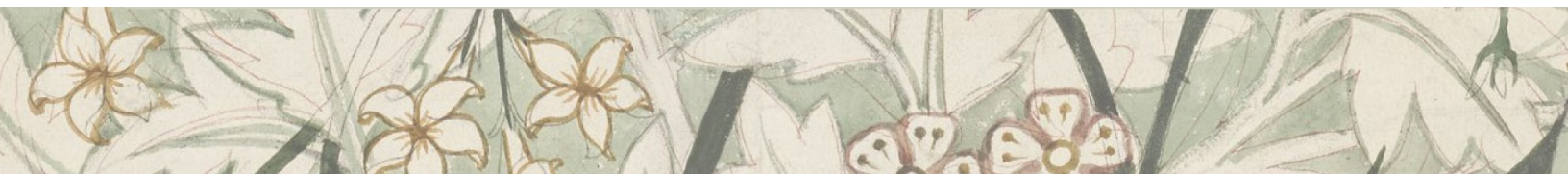
I'm a big advocate for creating your own space of grace, and it doesn't have to cost a lot of money. In fact, the essentials don't have to cost anything at all. Here are some tips for creating your own personal refuge on a budget.

Here is what you can do for free:

- Select a room or a corner of your home for your space of grace.
- Take a minimalist approach and clear the space of any clutter.
- Move your most comfortable chair and favorite piece of furniture into this space.
- Reduce the surrounding noise elements as much as possible.
- Keep all surfaces clean.
- Designate it a "kid-free" and "pet-free" zone.
- Eliminate any clashing colors.
- Remove potential distractions like TVs, computers, and phones.
- Give every item a home of its own so you'll always know where everything goes.
- When possible, allow natural sunlight to enter the room.
- Open a window for fresh air.
- Use a rain app for nature sounds.
- Create a playlist of your favorite instrumental music.
- Hide electrical cords as much as possible, like the ones for lamps.
- Keep your favorite personal items close by, like hand lotion or lip balm.
- Add a few of your favorite family photos.
- Stack a few your favorite books.
- Set a favorite journal and pen nearby.
- Keep your Bible within reach.

Here is what you can do with minimal cost:

- Add a few soft blankets and pillows.





- Add a soft rug.
- Find a lamp with three-way lighting.
- Use light bulbs with lower wattage. (Some prefer “cool” lights while others prefer “warm.” Know which kind of lighting you prefer best.)
- Perhaps even hang a strand of white Christmas lights.
- Set out a candle or maybe consider using the battery-operated kind.
- Add a green plant in a favorite pot.
- Add fresh flowers in a mason jar.
- Create a warm, pleasing aroma by baking.
- Create a clean, fresh aroma by boiling water with a sliced lemon and a few cloves and cinnamon sticks.
- Add something quirky just for fun, like a mug with a silly saying or a calendar with funny pictures.
- Use storage solutions that double as furniture, like a storage ottoman.
- Use plastic storage containers for under the bed or in the closet.

Here is what you can do with a little more investment:

- Paint the walls in a color that is pleasing to you.
- Select wall art or photography that makes you smile.
- Find a really comfortable chair you’ll enjoy spending time in.
- Use wooden crates or woven baskets for storage containers that are visible.
- Use a wireless speaker for your music.
- Add a small desktop fountain or aquarium.
- Use noise-canceling earphones.
- Add a minifridge or a coffee maker.
- Have a dimmer switch installed.

Your space of grace doesn’t need the budget of a big HGTV-makeover. It just needs a little intention and lot of love. I’m a big believer in keeping things simple. The simpler, the better.

You might be surprised at how calming it is to have your own space of grace. A place that is yours — that helps you become the best of who you are so you can love those around you even better.

P.S. When you’re finished, I’d love to celebrate your space of grace with you! Send me a photo at: denise@denisejhughes.com.

Quietly Yours,
Denise

