

# I Keep a Quiet Heart

by Elisabeth Elliot

---

*Elisabeth Elliot emphasizes the importance of cultivating a quiet heart through trust in God amidst life's challenges.*

**Duration:** 44:05

**Scripture:** Psalm 16:5, Daniel 3:16-18, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 14:22-27, Mark 4:35-41

**Topics:** "Quietness"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's presence, sovereignty, and love. He encourages the audience to have a quiet heart and not rush after their planned work, but instead trust that God will provide the time to finish it. The speaker also highlights the significance of prayer and lifting up one's heart to God, even in the midst of a noisy and demanding environment. He references the story in Mark 4:35-41 where Jesus calms a storm and questions why the disciples were afraid, reminding the audience to trust in God's power and presence.

---

## Transcript

Let's pray. Father, I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts may be acceptable in your sight because you are our strength and our redeemer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

I don't really meet very many people who seem to have a quiet heart. We women are particularly prone to complain about all sorts of things, and things are never just exactly the way we want them to be, or we wish we were somewhere else, or we had somebody else for a husband, or we didn't have this or that in our lives, or we didn't have that terrible neighbor that we have to get along with, or that awful person in the church that makes your life miserable. They're just a whole lot of things that keep us from having a quiet heart.

But I am absolutely convinced that it is possible not only to keep one, but to make it evident in your life. But of course it takes growth in grace, trusting God, learning to trust him, and that is a daily lesson for all of us, isn't it? I'm an old woman now, and I realize that there's not a day that goes by that the Lord doesn't have something else to teach me. Never imagine that we've ever arrived.

Many years ago when my oldest grandson was just a little boy, less than two I think, I happened to be in the car with him and his father. His father decided that that was the day they needed to go through the car wash. And so this little boy was not explained, it wasn't explained to him what was going to happen or

anything.

He was really too young to understand very much of anything. And so when the car was drawn into that dark tunnel, the automatic car wash, which can be a scary experience for any of us on the first run through, I saw this little boy's big blue eyes get bigger, and he looked around and he heard all these strange noises beginning, and he looked immediately to the face of his father. And then when suddenly the roar of the water came down on all four sides of the car, again his eyes opened wide with fear, and he looked around and then he looked at the face of his father.

And then the giant brushes closed in, it was kind of like some space movie or something, so frightening, all this terrible stuff, noises and strange things happening. And again his eyes darted around and then he looked at the face of his father. I could see the fear in his face, and I could see that he was ready to cry, but he never cried.

And finally when the car was pulled out into the sunshine, he broke into a big smile, and he had never shed one tear. And I thought about the fact that it was because he knew his father. Now he did not know why we were in there, he didn't know if we were ever going to get out, but he knew his father.

And he knew that never had his father given him reason not to trust him. We have a heavenly father whom we need to learn to trust. There is no remedy for fear except trust.

There isn't any other remedy. I don't know what you may be fearing tonight, but I do know that God knows. So often I receive letters from people asking me all kinds of impossible questions, and of course I can't possibly answer them all.

And I don't say, well I know exactly what you're going through, because most of the letters that I get are such horror stories that they have nothing to do with anything that I've ever been through. I feel as though I've never had a problem in my life when I read some of those letters. So I can't say I know exactly what you're going through, but there's one thing I can always say with absolute assurance, and that is, I don't know what you're going through, but I know the one who knows.

And he loves you. And he has allowed this to happen for his glory and for your growth in grace. And I trust that every one of us here is hungry to grow in grace.

Now for you diligent note-takers, and it's wonderful to see so many of you already scribbling away down there. It's really quite rare, you know, for people to bother to take notes. I don't know what you do with them when you get home.

Maybe you don't even, probably don't even get them home half the time. But at any rate, I'll give you three things by way of introduction. Three things for the first half, and then there are four things in the last part.

Number one is trust in God's presence. The second is trust in his sovereignty. You sang about his sovereignty a little while ago.

And number three is trust in his love, his presence, his sovereignty, and his love. You're familiar with the story in Mark 4, 35, but I'm going to read it for you anyway. You remember that Jesus was, when the evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, let us go over to the other side.

Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along just as he was in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up and the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped.

Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. I love that little human touch. Jesus was human, remember.

He had to sleep, so do we. And he enjoyed the comfort of a pillow, so do we. The disciples woke him and said to him, teacher, don't you care if we drown? He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, quiet, be still.

Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith? They were terrified and asked each other, who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him. These were the disciples, remember.

Those who had walked with him and talked with him and heard him pray. Here they were asking each other, who is this? They still didn't really understand, did they? That he was the almighty son of the almighty father. And even the wind and the waves knew his voice and obeyed.

How was it that Jesus was able to go to sleep in the midst of that storm? It was because of his absolute trust in his father. The disciples were saying, don't you care if we perish? That's a different translation from the one I read. But they weren't perishing, they were panicking, weren't they? And that's very easy for us to do, isn't it? To get all bent out of shape and just feel as if the end of the world has come, and we're just not trusting.

We're panicking. Amy Carmichael wrote a poem about that little incident that I've just read. Hold us in quiet through the age-long minute while thou art silent and the wind is shrill.

Can the boat sink when thou, dear Lord, art in it? Can the heart faint that waiteth on thy will? Hold us in quiet. We need quietness. How much do you arrange for in your life? How much noise do you have to have? If you go for a walk, do you have to have Walkman in your ears? We live on the coast in Massachusetts, and it's amazing to us that the people who come down to sit on the rocks in front of our house will sometimes bring with them a boombox.

Or they're sitting down there, when we're sitting up on our terrace, and I love the sound of the ocean and the sound of the seagulls, and those are the only sounds we hear, and there they are with a radio. And I think, do they ever want real quiet and peace? We need to arrange in our lives for quietness, solitude, and I want to recommend to you mothers of young children that you should have a quiet hour in the afternoon. And this is something that my daughter did.

She realized how desperately she needed some quiet, and she certainly understood that children need quiet as well, and they need to be taught solitude. And so every afternoon in her family, and she has eight children, everything shuts down at two o'clock in the afternoon, and each child has to be alone, and is not allowed to listen to music, or turn on tape recorders, or play with any kind of toys that make any kind of noise, and each one has to be alone in his own room, or in a room where my daughter might assign him. Of course, she doesn't have eight bedrooms, but they know that there's a whole hour that they are not allowed to come out of the room, there's no running to get glasses of water, or coming in to say, Mommy, what do I do now? And they're not even allowed to go to the bathroom, they have to do that before the hour starts.

And so when there's this total calm, these children are learning to appreciate solitude and silence, and think what it's doing for the mother. Have you thought about that? And Valerie, she's a real champion at being able to lie down and go to sleep just like that for 10 minutes, and wake up in 10 minutes, and then she gets up, and she's got 50 minutes to do something which she wants to be able to do without being interrupted by children. And the little children who don't have, who don't read time, are given a timer, and the timer is put in the room, and Valerie says, when the bell rings, you can come out.

You are not to come out until the bell rings. You know, if you start that, just the minute the child stops having an afternoon nap, he can take it for granted that this is a quiet time, even though he doesn't go to sleep. I just want to put that little parenthesis in by way of a very strong suggestion.

If you're not doing that, if your children are not being taught to amuse themselves without saying, well, what can I do now, mom? And if they're not being taught to appreciate total silence, do something about it. Hold us in quiet through the age-long minute while thou art silent, and the wind is shrill. Can the boat sink when thou, dear Lord, art in it? Can the heart faint that waiteth on thy will? Trust in his sovereignty is the second thing.

Now, what does sovereignty mean? God is totally in charge of the universe. He is all-powerful, he is omnipotent, he is running the show. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can take place without his permission.

Now, that's a sticky one for us to swallow, isn't it? Because we always want to ask the question, but how does this terrible thing that happened have anything to do with the will of God? Why did God let that happen? Who of us has not asked that question? And of course, the answer is none of our business. Why? God knows exactly what he's doing, and absolutely nothing can happen without his permission. He is sovereign, he's running the show.

And so if I can absolutely trust and rest in the fact that my Heavenly Father is the engineer of the universe, there's no reason to lose my peace. I can keep a quiet heart. George MacDonald has written some wonderful novels.

George MacDonald was a Scottish minister back in the 1800s, and he was jailed, he was deprived of his ministry and put into jail, and then he had a very large family of 11 children. And so when he got out of jail, he decided that the best thing to do in order to support the family was to write some books. So he wrote many, many books.

I have a shelf about this long, which is not nearly half of them. And he has some wonderful stories in there, and one of them has a dialogue between two men. And I copied this out on a little three-by-five slip of paper for my father, because my father was a worrier, and my mother was a worrier, and I'm a born worrier, so I know what I'm talking about when I say that we need to learn to keep a quiet heart.

And over the years, I could see that my parents did learn that. There was real spiritual growth in them as I look back. Of course, I wasn't aware of it at the time.

But I can remember my father worrying a great deal about the business that he was in at a certain point. And so I copied out this quotation from George MacDonald and gave it to my father back in 1959, and he carried it in his wallet until he died in 1963. And I have the very same slip of paper here.

And this is the dialogue between these two men, conversation. One of them said, the care that is filling your mind at this moment, or but waiting until you lay the book down to leap upon you, that need, which is

no need, is a demon sucking at the spring of your life. And his friend says, no, mine is a reasonable care, an unavoidable care, indeed.

Is it something you have to do this very moment, says his friend? No. Then you are allowing it to usurp the place of something that is required of you this moment. And his friend says, there is nothing required of me at this moment.

Nay, but there is the greatest thing that can be required of a man. And what is that, says his friend? Trust in the living God. I do trust him in spiritual things.

Everything is an affair of the spirit. Do you believe that? Everything is an affair of the spirit. It matters how you do your housework.

It matters how you treat your husband and your children. It matters what you read, what you see, what you love, what you do. Everything is an affair of the spirit.

So when you think of trusting in the sovereignty of God, you realize that God's sovereignty probes every single area of your life. And let's not make the very common mistake of separating the spiritual from the physical, or that which is spiritual work as opposed to that which is housework, for example. There is no dichotomy for a Christian.

Everything that I do is meant to be an offering to Jesus Christ. All that I am, all that I have, all that I do, and all that I suffer is meant to be an offering to Jesus Christ. Do you suppose, ladies, that Jesus is more interested, or shall we say even more impressed, with my standing in front of an audience like this and speaking than he is in the way I iron Larsa's shirt or clean the bathtub? I don't think so.

I don't think there is any difference in God's eyes. There is a time for me to iron a shirt, and a time to clean the bathroom, and a time to speak to a group of ladies. It just happens that this is part of my assignment.

But this is not spiritual work as opposed to the rest. It's all for Jesus. And I want you to get that into your heads as clearly as you possibly can, because some of you have been thinking, I wish I could do something really wonderful for God.

I wish the Lord would give me a ministry. Well, if you're a mother, God has given you a ministry, hasn't he? A lady said to my mother one time, or she said to me, I guess after my mother had died, she said, what did your mother do outside of the house? And I said, nothing at all. She said, you mean she didn't have any ministry? And I said, well, we were her ministry, her six children.

And she said, she gave her whole life to her six children? I said, yes. And I said, if you were to ask my mother what she did, that is what she would tell you. She raised six children for God.

And she said to me, this woman just looked at me with the most pitying expression, and she said, well, that means she didn't have any life of her own, did she? And I said, if you had asked my mother if she had a life of her own, my mother would not have had the foggiest notion what you were talking about. We were the ministry that God had given her. I don't know what ministry God has given you, but I know he's given every single one of you a ministry.

Ministry means service. It doesn't mean anything else. You must get that through your heads.

Trust in his sovereignty. He assigns you your place in his scheme of things. Are you being faithful in that place? Now, one who truly believes in God is not going to be worried about tomorrow.

As I've already confessed, I'm a born worrier, and I realize it is a sin. We have been told clearly in scripture, do not worry about anything, whatever. We're told that when Jesus spoke in the book of Matthew, don't worry about anything.

And in Philippians 4, do not worry about anything whatsoever. And we do it, don't we? We, we are sinning when we do that. But if we truly believe in God, there is absolutely nothing to worry about.

And I do think that I've made a certain amount of progress along those lines. As I look back over more than seven decades, I realize that nothing that I worried about has ever done any good. It is a colossal waste of time and energy, and that's bad enough.

But the worst thing about it is that it is disobedience. Now, can you remember what you worried about last Tuesday? Probably some of you worried about whether you were going to get here tonight. Whatever it was that you worried about, it didn't help, did it? So cut it out, ladies, just quit.

Stop it. Now, one of the most, I would say, perhaps the most difficult decision that I ever had to make in my life was whether I was going to go and live with the Indians who had killed my husband. And I had prayed a prayer after Jim died, Lord, if there's anything you want me to do about the Alka Indians, I'm available, thinking it was a very safe prayer.

Have you ever prayed a prayer that you certainly didn't intend for God to answer? You just thought that maybe you ought to pray it, but you didn't really expect that God was going to pay much attention to it. Well, the time came when it appeared that God might indeed be asking me to do just that. And so I lay awake at night worrying about how would I get there? How would I know that this is really what you want me to do, Lord? How would I know what, when to go? And what in the world would I do with my three-year-old daughter? Of course, there was no question of my leaving her behind.

I was her mother, and I was certainly not planning to turn her over to somebody else to raise. So I figured if God wants me to go to the Alkas, God wants Valerie to go to the Alkas. Now, you can imagine that her grandparents took a rather dim view of my taking their little granddaughter in to live with the tribe of naked people that had killed her father.

Imagine a three-year-old child being taken into a place like that. So I think you can sympathize with my temptation to worry. And I would lie awake at night, and I did a lot of it, a lot of worrying.

But constantly the Lord was speaking to me in that still, small voice, just saying, I'm in charge. I know what I'm doing. I'm not going to ask you to do anything for which I am not going to give you the grace.

Now, that did not mean that he was not going to let me get killed. He didn't tell me ahead of time that he wasn't going to let me get killed. That was none of my business.

Now, I want you to get this spiritual principle very clearly in your minds. Obedience is our business. The results of that obedience are God's business.

You understand that? It wasn't up to me to figure out what was going to be the result of my going in there. I had no more guarantee that I was going to come back out alive than the five men did. So I had to trust in

his sovereignty.

And I thought of a lovely little poem that was posted over the bed in the summer place that we used to go to in New Hampshire when I was a little child. Those thrilling few weeks that we would have when we drove from Philadelphia up to New Hampshire. In fact, we used to go by Pullman train in those days.

None of you here have ever heard of a Pullman train probably, but that was the most exciting thing in the whole wide world. It's just tragic that it doesn't exist anymore. But then when my parents managed to get a car back in the thirties, we would drive and it took us two days from Philadelphia up to New Hampshire.

And I loved getting into that tiny little bedroom, which was always mine. I could smell the lovely fragrance of the balsam and the pine come through the window. And I could hear the little river down below rippling over the stones and the sighing of the wind and the trees.

And I would sink down into that feather bed and over the bed was posted this little poem that said, sleep sweetly in this quiet room, O thou who e'er thou art, and let no mournful yesterdays disturb thy peaceful heart, nor let tomorrow scare thy rest with thoughts of coming ill. Thy maker is thy changeless friend. His love surrounds thee still.

Forget thyself and all the world. Put out each feverish light. The stars are watching overhead.

Sleep sweetly then. Good night. And I would go to sleep very happily and quietly.

Number three. If we're going to keep a quiet heart, we have to trust in his love. He is perfectly wise.

He is perfectly constant, constant, which means he is the same yesterday and today and forever. And he is perfectly capable of holding us up in the everlasting arms. Anybody here who has ever heard me say you are loved with an everlasting love, that's what the Bible says.

And underneath are the everlasting arms and he's not going to let go. He is not going to let go of you. Those everlasting arms are there.

And another little story from George MacDonald's novel. He tells the story of a young man who was way up in the highlands of Scotland when a sudden flash flood occurred and he found himself almost swept away in the river. He managed to gain his foothold and he saw a girl desperately clinging to a tree and the river was rising rapidly and the roaring water was swirling all around.

And the young man was able to go and rescue the girl and hold her in his arms. She was a girl about 12 years old and he was holding her in his arms above the level of the water. But of course the water was constantly rising.

And as the water was rising, he was continuing to lift her arms, but she could see to lift her in his arms. But it was very obvious to the girl that not very long from then he wasn't going to be able to hold her any above the flood. And she looks up terrified into his face and she says, are you sure that the floods will not drown us? His answer is no.

But I am sure that no flood can sweep us out of the everlasting arms. No flood can sweep us out of the everlasting arms. No disaster can take you out of those arms.

So you have to trust his love. How is it that his love can allow tragic things to happen? Read the Bible. Think of the things that happened to Joseph.

But in the end of that amazing story of all those years of imprisonment and the hatred of his brothers and everything, when he finally meets his brothers and is able to preserve them from famine, he says, you meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. There's that seeming paradox, isn't it? The sovereignty of God which allows evil to occur, and the absolute ability of God to bring good out of that evil. Well, think of Daniel having to go into the lion's den.

He didn't know he was going to come out, did he? He was obedient to God. Obedience was his job. The results of that obedience was God's job.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they went into the fiery furnace. They didn't know that they were going to come out again. Of course they didn't.

They certainly expected to be burned to a crisp. And the king mocked them. And he said, do you really think that your God can keep you out of this furnace? And they said, yes, but we want you to know, O king, that if he doesn't, be it known unto you that we will not bow down and serve you.

And then of course John the Baptist had his head chopped off because he was being obedient to God. Stephen was stoned to death as he was preaching the gospel. And what did you sing about just a little while ago? Our sinless savior was nailed to a cross, wasn't he? God allows terrible things to happen, but he knows how to transform them.

And so he's saying to you and me today, keep a quiet heart. I know what I'm doing. I never make any mistakes.

I haven't forgotten you. I haven't let go. Trust in his love.

Those are the first three points. Now there's four things that describe the difference that Christ can make in your life if you keep a quiet heart. Now just for those who have already lost your place in numbers one, two, and three, trust in God's presence.

Number two, trust in his sovereignty. Number three, trust in his love. Now the difference that a quiet heart makes.

Number one, you will begin to qualify as an instrument of peace. I hope that you know that beautiful prayer written about 700 years ago by St. Francis of Assisi. I have this framed on the wall of my study and I use it as a prayer very often.

I want to recommend that you use written prayers. Now maybe that'll be a shock to some of you. I came from the kind of a background where we kind of thought that anything that wasn't just spontaneous was a little bit suspicious.

And I've certainly learned since then that God didn't put all those prayers in the Bible for nothing. He told us that we were to say the Lord's Prayer. So that's perfectly clear.

That is a command that we are to use those words. When you pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. And I do trust that you know that prayer and that you use it very often.

But there are also many other prayers. Almost, I think, all of Paul's epistles have prayers in them. And those are worth memorizing and use them.

But I also use prayers that are not in the Bible that other people have written because they have been able to articulate things which I would never be able to have thought of. But it's just what I want to pray. I wouldn't have been able to without the help that I've gotten from all these other sources.

So St. Francis's prayer says this, Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith. Where there is despair, hope. Where there is sadness, joy.

Where there is darkness, light. O Divine Master, grant that I may seek not so much to be consoled. And this is a word that we females desperately need.

We're always feeling so sorry for ourselves, you know. We want people to hover over us and surround us and prop us up and feel sorry for us and tell us how awful everything is. Teach me not so much to be consoled as to console.

To be understood as to understand. To be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned. And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. You begin to qualify as an instrument of God's peace if you have a quiet heart.

And Lars, I can see you standing back there, but I cannot tell what your hands are doing. If you would stand outside that door to my right, I would be able to see you. If you'd stand just behind it where there's a little bit of light.

I desperately need his signals as to when I'm to stop. And he's always back there to help me with that, so I'm very grateful. Obviously we're getting down toward the end here.

The second thing, your energy will be directed toward God, not toward yourself, which means that you will have the ability to work and not to worry. When your energies are directed toward God, it's going to eliminate worry. Martin Luther said, Jesus taught us to work and to watch, but never to worry.

And we are to live in a serene tranquility with a quiet heart. I've been amazed at how many different writers use the phrase, a quiet heart. I was quite surprised to find it in Martin Luther's prayer.

Not a prayer, but a statement here. Jesus taught us to work and to watch, but never to worry or to be anxious, but to commit all to him and live in the serene tranquility of a quiet heart. And the third thing, the difference which will be made if you keep a quiet heart, instead of frustration, acceptance.

Temptation comes from the enemy to be frustrated. The antidote for that is acceptance, which is simply lifting up your hands and saying, yes, Lord, I'll take it. I will receive this inconvenience, this perplexity, this sorrow, this disease, this miserable person.

Yes, Lord. Says in Psalm 16.5, Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup and have made my lot secure. And I find that a very stabilizing, calming, quieting verse.

Everything that happens has been assigned. Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup and have made my lot secure. A quotation from this wonderful little devotional called Joy and Strength, now this is called Daily Strength for Daily Needs, is another one by the same author called Joy and Strength.

And this book has been around for more than a hundred years. And I found this very helpful. In fact, it was this particular passage that gave me the idea for the title of my talk and also the book.

This is by somebody named Annie Keary. I don't know who she was. I think I find most help in trying to look on all interruptions and hindrances to work that one has planned out for oneself as discipline.

Trials sent by God to help one against getting selfish over one's work. Then one can feel that perhaps one's true work, one's work for God, consists in doing some trifling haphazard thing that has been thrown into one's day. Now that has helped me so many times because I don't think a day goes by when some trifling haphazard thing doesn't get thrown in to mess up my schedule.

And I like a schedule and I want everything to go exactly my way. And so the Lord sees to it that some trifling haphazard thing gets thrown into my day. It is not a waste of time as one is tempted to think.

It is the most important part of the work of the day. The part one can best offer to God. After such a hindrance, get this, do not rush after the planned work.

Trust that the time to finish it will be given sometime. And keep a quiet heart. What a help.

And number four, the last of these. It's going to make a difference in the way in which people see you as a calm person. You will have far more room for prayer.

Lift up your heart just quietly while you're doing your housework, while you're doing your work. If those of you who work in an office, it may be a noisy place. It may be a place in which there are constant demands upon you.

And you can just quietly lift up your heart to God. Sometimes just lift up your eyes and that gesture in a split second, God will see just a reminder, Lord, I need your help. Lord, I worship you.

Lord, I accept this. Back during World War II, a group of about a hundred Chinese had to make their ways through the mountains. It was a very dangerous and very long and arduous journey.

And they made this little song, which they sang, I will not be afraid. I will not be afraid. I will look upward and travel onward and not be afraid.

That is a choice. To not be afraid is a choice. And it takes the calm that the Holy Spirit can give you to make that kind of a choice.

Just choose not to be afraid. And I would just ask you in closing, has God ever broken a promise? No. He doesn't break his promises.

And so he says, will you love me? Will you trust me? Will you praise me? He wants us to keep a quiet heart. Trust in his presence, trust in his sovereignty, trust in his love. Qualify as an instrument of his peace.

Direct your energies toward God. Instead of frustration, acceptance. And you will learn the calm.

There's an old hymn that says, drop thy still dues of quietness till all our strivings cease. Take from our souls the strain and stress and let our ordered lives confess the beauty of thy peace. God bless you.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/26/SID26447.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/elisabeth-elliott/i-keep-a-quiet-heart/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**