1. The word “discipline” originates from the Latin word *disciplina* which means “instruction” and derives from the root *discere* which means “to learn.” The word *discipulus* which means “disciple or pupil” also stems from this word. So in a very fundamental sense, discipline can be considered systematic instruction given to a disciple. How are solitude and silence disciplines in the “systematic” sense of the word?

2. If a discipline is systematic instruction *given* to disciples, one might expect to find multiple examples where Jesus communicates or models the disciplines of solitude and silence. List some.

3. Is there a difference between solitude and silence? What is the difference? Can you have one without the other?
4. In his classic book *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*, Henry David Thoreau describes an experiment in which he removes himself from the general population to better commune with nature and simplify his life. He did this as a means to transcend an otherwise ordinary existence. Compare and contrast this with the biblical view of solitude.

5. T.S. Eliot says “Where shall the world be found, where will the word resound? Not here, there is not enough silence.” And Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 says “To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools. Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven, and you upon earth; therefore let your words be few.” What are some dangers we risk (even unintentionally) every time we speak?

6. John Cage, the avant-garde musician, composed a song entitled 4’33” which was a four minute, thirty-three second long piece comprised of 3 separate movements in which not a single note was played. Instead, listeners inescapably became aware of the sounds of their environment, which became an intrinsic part of the experience. In what ways is this similar to the spiritual discipline of silence? In what ways does it differ?

7. Discipline can be described as an external practice designed to bring about an internal change. Read Matthew 17:1-11. What should be the internal change that results from practicing the disciplines of solitude and silence? In what ways do solitude and silence work together to achieve that goal?
8. What dangers can arise from an unhealthy balance between the discipline of solitude and the principle of spiritual community? What about between the disciplines of silence and prayer?

9. List several tangible ways that you can begin practicing the disciplines of solitude and silence.