

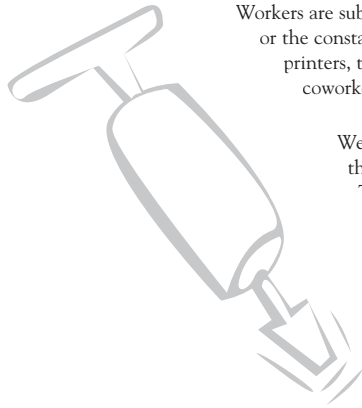
peace and quiet

Peace and quiet. We all know how great it is for us, and yet it's hard to come by. We may beg our kids for a little peace and quiet. Our doctor may prescribe a few weeks of peace and quiet. We all want and need it occasionally. Yeah, right. How often does that happen?

Take the second part first. Quiet—a precious commodity these days.

We are constantly bombarded by noise. Outside it's traffic, sirens, jackhammers, and jumbo jets. Inside it's even worse.

Workers are subjected to ear-piercing heavy machinery or the constant drone of copy machines, computer printers, telephones, elevator Muzak, and coworker phone conversations.



We look forward to relaxing at home. But the first thing many of us do is flip on the TV or stereo, adding to sounds of the phone, doorbell, microwave, washing machine, garbage disposal, blow dryer, and video games—not to mention kids and pets.

Because human beings are amazingly adaptable, we often become less conscious of certain everyday sounds.

But all that noise can have negative effects—high blood pressure, muscular tension, irritability, nervousness, and significant loss of hearing are but a few. Constant exposure to noise affects our relationships, too. We start tuning out more and really listening less. Noise even affects the crime rate and number of suicides. The worse the noise, the higher the numbers.

We get so accustomed to noise that silence can be awkward or unnerving. It shouldn't be! Quiet is a time of healing and rejuvenation. It's where we can find some peace—peace that comes through reduced external stimulation, quiet reflection, simple awareness, or prayer. Quiet is the cause, peace is the effect.

So, the next time your body needs to unwind, your brain needs to calm down, and your spirit needs attention, turn off the TV and seek out some quiet. That, my friends, is the precursor to inner peace.