FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

LAPLACE

INVITATION TO SILENCE

Learning to be still in the presence of God.

EXPANDED LEADER MANUSCRIPTS

A 12-week spiritual formation course · Spring 2027

Twelve expanded teaching manuscripts, with pastoral transitions and Scripture-centered exposition.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF LAPLACE

Using these manuscripts

These are spoken teaching drafts to develop alongside the original leader guide. Each lesson includes three developed teaching movements. Read the primary Scripture in full, pause for reflection, add a personal illustration where appropriate, and use the discussion and guided-practice instructions in the companion guide. A 25-minute delivery requires a measured pace, reading the passage, and interaction; these are not verbatim 25-minute transcripts.

Book integration and reading calendar

Use the opening section of Into the Quiet during Weeks 1–2; the eremos and wilderness material during Weeks 3–4; encounter with ourselves during Weeks 5–6 and 8; encounter with God during Week 7; Gethsemane during Week 9; the enemy and discernment themes during Week 10; and the quiet life material during Weeks 11–12. These are thematic connections, not verified chapter or page assignments. Confirm the contents and pagination of the edition purchased for the class before distributing required readings.

WEEK 01 / The Invitation to Be Still

Psalm 46:1–11

Central claim: Silence is not about escaping noise; it is learning attentiveness to the God who is already present.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

The psalm begins with a confession, not a technique. Before the earth moves, before the mountains shake, the people of God are given words for who God is: refuge, strength, and a present help. Read the opening verses aloud and let the violent images remain vivid. The psalm does not pretend the world is calm. It asks what remains dependable when the world is not. Invite listeners to name an ordinary source of instability without sharing private details. Then ask what changes when the first word in the conversation is not our anxiety but God’s character.

Teaching movement two

The command to be still arrives amid the Lord’s triumph over nations and warfare. It is a summons to recognize his sovereignty, not originally a manual for meditation. This distinction matters. We are not using a verse as a shortcut to a calming sensation; we are learning from its theological claim. When we cease striving, we acknowledge that the world is not held together by our frantic effort. The practice of quiet can become a small embodied confession: I am not God, and I do not have to be.

Teaching movement three

Mark 1:35 offers a complementary picture: Jesus deliberately goes away to pray. Do not claim that the Gospels specify absolute silence during this prayer. They do show intentional withdrawal. Invite the group to try three quiet minutes with an open Bible and a simple prayer. Some will feel peaceful, others restless. Neither feeling proves success or failure. The point is to turn toward the Lord who is already present.

Questions for conversation

- What feels loudest in your life right now?
- How does Psalm 46 locate our security in God rather than circumstances?
- What would three quiet minutes make room for?

Guided practice and sending

3 minutes of silence each day; notice distractions without judging yourself.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 02 / The Noise We Carry

Luke 10:38–42

Central claim: Good responsibilities can become anxious distractions that crowd out attentive discipleship.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Luke introduces Martha as the one who welcomes Jesus. Honor that welcome. Hospitality is not the villain of this story; it is a good work that has become entangled with distraction. The text says Martha is pulled away by much serving. Ask listeners to consider how often their good responsibilities become the very things that scatter their attention. We can be doing something valuable while losing our capacity to be present to the person before us.

Teaching movement two

Mary sits at the Lord’s feet and listens to his teaching. Her posture is that of a disciple receiving instruction. Jesus does not condemn all preparation, and the passage should not be turned into a contrast between active and contemplative personalities. He names Martha’s worry and agitation and commends the priority Mary has chosen. In a culture that praises availability and productivity, we may need to recover the simple permission to listen.

Teaching movement three

Translate this into a week of practice: before reaching for the phone, sit with Luke 10 and ask, What is necessary now? Silence will not wash the dishes or answer an email. It may help us return to those tasks less scattered and more loving. Invite participants to choose one small moment to resist automatic distraction and to turn their attention toward Jesus.

Questions for conversation

- What good thing tends to consume your attention?
- How does Jesus address Martha?
- How can you serve without becoming distracted by service?

Guided practice and sending

5 minutes daily; replace one habitual phone-check with quiet prayer.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 03 / The Way of Jesus

Mark 1:32–39

Central claim: Jesus withdrew to pray even amid legitimate and urgent demands.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Mark’s account moves quickly: healings, crowds, and urgent needs. Jesus is not withdrawing from imaginary problems. People genuinely need help. That is why verse 35 is striking. Before daylight he rises, leaves the house, and prays in a deserted place. Give the class a moment to feel the tension: the demands of love and the practice of prayer are both present in the same life.

Teaching movement two

The word eremos points to a deserted or lonely place, not necessarily a dramatic wilderness adventure. In the Gospels, withdrawal is often ordinary and deliberate. The passage does not give a universal command to wake before sunrise. It gives us a glimpse of Jesus refusing to let constant demand eliminate communion with the Father. Ask: Which demands are real, and which have become expectations we never examine?

Teaching movement three

When the disciples find Jesus, they announce that everyone is looking for him. Jesus answers by naming his preaching mission in other towns. Prayer and mission are not competing departments. A life with God can create the space to discern what faithfulness actually requires. Invite listeners to identify one place and one time they could regularly set apart for prayer.

Questions for conversation

- What makes you feel constantly available?
- What does Jesus do before the disciples find him?
- Where can you establish a small place of solitude?

Guided practice and sending

5–7 minutes daily; schedule one longer period of solitude.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 04 / Into the Wilderness

Luke 4:1–13

Central claim: Solitude can expose competing desires and invite deeper dependence on God.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Luke says Jesus is full of the Holy Spirit and is led in the wilderness. The scene follows his baptism and precedes his public ministry. This is not a story about an exhausted person finding a pleasant retreat. It is a scene of testing, hunger, and allegiance. Draw the connection to Israel’s wilderness journey, where dependence on the Lord was tested over time.

Teaching movement two

Walk through the temptations without reducing them to generic self-help. Bread addresses hunger and provision. The kingdoms offer power apart from the path of obedience. The temple temptation distorts trust into a demand for proof. Jesus answers with words from Deuteronomy. His responses show that fidelity to God is more fundamental than satisfying every immediate impulse or seizing every available opportunity.

Teaching movement three

Our chosen moments of solitude are not identical to Jesus’ forty days. Yet quiet can reveal how quickly we reach for comfort, control, or approval. When a participant notices an urge to escape the silence, the invitation is not shame. It is curiosity before God: What am I asking this distraction to give me? Return to Scripture and prayer, trusting the Lord who sustains his people.

Questions for conversation

- What do you reach for when uncomfortable?
- What does Jesus’ use of Scripture teach us?
- How can solitude support faithful responses?

Guided practice and sending

10 minutes daily with a short Scripture passage as an anchor.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 05 / Quieting the Soul

Psalm 131

Central claim: A quiet soul grows through humility and trust, not through having every answer.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Psalm 131 is only three verses long. Read it twice. David begins with the language of humility: his heart is not lifted up and his eyes are not raised too high. He refuses to occupy himself with matters too great for him. This is not a rejection of learning or responsibility. It is an admission that a creature cannot carry the burden of being Creator.

Teaching movement two

The image of a weaned child is tender and demanding. A child who has learned to rest with a parent is not merely grasping for immediate satisfaction. The psalmist says he has calmed and quieted his soul. Notice the active language: quietness can be cultivated, though it cannot be forced. A quiet soul is not empty of concern; it is learning not to be ruled by concern.

Teaching movement three

The final verse turns outward: Israel is called to hope in the Lord. This is communal wisdom, not private self-optimization. Encourage the class to bring one unfinished concern into silence. Rather than solving it in prayer, name it and entrust it to God. A few minutes of stillness can remind us that our limits are real and God’s faithfulness is greater.

Questions for conversation

- What are you trying to control?
- What does the child image suggest about rest?
- How might humility change your prayer?

Guided practice and sending

10 minutes daily; begin by reading Psalm 131.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 06 / A Heart That Listens

1 Samuel 3:1–10

Central claim: Listening begins with humble readiness to receive and obey God’s revealed Word.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Samuel’s story begins in a particular historical setting. The word of the Lord is rare, Eli’s household is troubled, and Samuel is serving in the sanctuary. This is a prophetic call narrative, not a promise that every Christian will hear an audible voice when a room becomes quiet. Teaching the context protects people from false expectations.

Teaching movement two

Samuel repeatedly mistakes the call for Eli’s voice. Eli eventually recognizes what is happening and instructs Samuel to answer as a servant. The central posture is readiness to hear and obey. Even here, the content of God’s message is not merely comforting. Listening to God is not a method for collecting pleasant impressions; it can lead to costly faithfulness.

Teaching movement three

For followers of Jesus, Scripture is our reliable and authoritative foundation for discernment. Read a short passage slowly and ask what it actually says before asking what it means for us. Then pray in response. Encourage participants not to label every inner thought a divine message. A humble listener remains open to correction, rooted in Scripture, and accountable within the church.

Questions for conversation

- How do we avoid treating every impression as God’s voice?
- What does Samuel’s response teach?
- What Scripture calls you to obedience?

Guided practice and sending

10 minutes with Scripture, silence, and a written prayer.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 07 / God in the Quiet

1 Kings 19:1–18

Central claim: God cares for his people in weakness; his presence is not limited to dramatic experiences.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Elijah has witnessed dramatic events on Carmel, yet he is now frightened, exhausted, and despondent. Do not rush past the fact that the Lord provides food, water, and rest. Spiritual need and bodily need are not rivals. Sometimes the most caring response to a depleted person is to help them rest and receive practical support.

Teaching movement two

At Horeb the narrative describes wind, earthquake, and fire, followed by a quiet sound. Translation choices differ in how that sound is rendered. Avoid teaching that God is never in dramatic events or that every whisper inside our heads is God speaking. The scene reveals that Elijah’s expectations do not govern the Lord’s self-disclosure. God addresses him and asks what he is doing there.

Teaching movement three

The story continues with instruction, renewed work, and the assurance that Elijah is not alone. The quiet encounter does not remove him from the world forever. It returns him to vocation and community. Invite participants to sit without demanding an extraordinary sensation. God’s faithfulness is not measured by whether today’s practice feels dramatic.

Questions for conversation

- How does fatigue affect you?
- What expectations do you bring into prayer?
- What does God give Elijah after the encounter?

Guided practice and sending

15 minutes daily, divided into shorter periods if needed.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 08 / What Silence Reveals

Psalm 139

Central claim: Because God knows us fully, we can approach him with honesty rather than hiding.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Psalm 139 begins with a breathtaking assertion: the Lord has searched and known the psalmist. Thoughts, words, movements, and rest are all within God’s knowledge. For some, being known feels comforting; for others, it feels exposing. Give room for both responses. The psalm’s first move is not to tell us to examine ourselves but to remind us that God already knows us.

Teaching movement two

The middle of the psalm celebrates God’s inescapable presence. Neither distance nor darkness hides a person from him. This is a foundation for prayerful honesty. We do not have to create God’s presence through a technique, nor can we protect ourselves by refusing to name what is true. Silence can make our avoidance patterns more visible.

Teaching movement three

The closing prayer asks God to search the heart and lead in the everlasting way. Explain the difference between conviction, which calls us toward repentance and life, and endless self-accusation, which keeps us circling around ourselves. Invite private reflection; do not pressure public disclosure. The goal is honest prayer under the mercy of God.

Questions for conversation

- What do you avoid facing?
- How does being known by God affect you?
- What is the difference between conviction and shame?

Guided practice and sending

15 minutes of silence and optional private journaling.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 09 / The Practice of Surrender

Matthew 26:36–46

Central claim: Surrender brings our real desires before God while trusting his will.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Gethsemane is not a generic picture of a difficult day. Jesus approaches the unique suffering bound up with his redemptive mission. He tells his closest disciples that his soul is overwhelmed with sorrow. The scene grants us permission to reject the idea that faithful prayer must sound cheerful or composed.

Teaching movement two

Jesus asks that the cup pass from him, yet submits to the Father’s will. His prayer is neither a denial of desire nor a refusal of obedience. Read his words carefully. In our own prayers, we can name what we hope for and what we fear without pretending to control the outcome. Surrender is relational trust, not numb resignation.

Teaching movement three

The disciples fall asleep; Jesus urges watchfulness and prayer. Their weakness should humble us. Spiritual practices do not make us invulnerable. Invite participants to write a private sentence beginning, Father, I desire, and another beginning, Yet I entrust. Silence can hold both honest longing and obedient trust.

Questions for conversation

- What does Jesus’ honesty teach us?
- How is surrender different from passivity?
- What concern can you entrust to God?

Guided practice and sending

15 minutes daily including a prayer of surrender.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 10 / The Beauty of an Ordinary Life

1 Thessalonians 4:9–12

Central claim: Quiet faithfulness expresses itself through love, work, and ordinary obedience.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Paul begins with brotherly love. Before speaking about quiet living, he celebrates a community taught by God to love one another. This guards us against a distorted contemplative life that becomes a retreat from people. Our private habits should make us more capable of loving our neighbors.

Teaching movement two

Paul then urges believers to aspire to live quietly, mind their affairs, and work with their hands. Explain that this is counsel about communal conduct and responsible life, not a command for every believer to leave society or speak less. The surprising word is aspire: quiet faithfulness can be a worthy ambition.

Teaching movement three

The result Paul envisions includes a credible witness to outsiders. Ask participants to imagine an ordinary week in which they are less reactive, more patient, and more faithful at work and home. That may be a more reliable sign of spiritual growth than a memorable experience in solitude. Invite three brief pauses in the day, each followed by a concrete act of love.

Questions for conversation

- What does culture say makes a life important?
- What does Paul actually command?
- How can quiet prayer shape your relationships?

Guided practice and sending

Continue silence; add three short pauses during ordinary activities.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 11 / Abiding in His Presence

John 15:1–11

Central claim: Fruitfulness comes from abiding in Christ, not mastering a spiritual technique.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Jesus calls himself the true vine and names the Father as the gardener. The metaphor establishes dependence from the start. A branch cannot create life by straining harder. Likewise, the practices we learn in this course do not generate grace or make us worthy of God’s attention.

Teaching movement two

The command to abide includes remaining in Jesus and his words. Do not collapse abiding into sitting silently. Abiding involves faith, prayer, obedience, and love. Silence may help us attend to Christ, but it is one practice within the larger life of discipleship. If the practice becomes a scorecard, we have mistaken the branch for the vine.

Teaching movement three

Jesus connects abiding to fruit, love, obedience, and joy. Ask participants to evaluate their rhythms by their fruit in ordinary relationships. Does a quiet morning help you listen more patiently? Does prayer lead to repentance or generosity? Begin drafting a Rule of Silence that is realistic enough to sustain and flexible enough to serve love.

Questions for conversation

- How can practices become performance?
- What fruit do you hope to see?
- What sustainable rhythm could help you abide?

Guided practice and sending

Draft a daily, weekly, and monthly Rule of Silence.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.

WEEK 12 / Living from the Quiet

Luke 5:15–16

Central claim: The goal is not completing a course but living in deeper communion with Jesus.

Opening transition

Begin by inviting participants to reflect on their practice without grading themselves. Read the passage aloud and say: We are going to let Scripture set the agenda for our quiet, rather than expecting quiet to tell us what Scripture means.

Teaching movement one

Luke describes growing crowds around Jesus. His reputation is spreading, and people gather to hear and be healed. Then Luke offers a brief but important observation: Jesus would withdraw to deserted places and pray. The rhythm persists as demands increase.

Teaching movement two

This final session is not a graduation from needing solitude. It is a beginning of a sustainable pattern. Review the four movements of the course: invitation, wilderness, encounter, and quiet life. Remind participants that each movement was intended to bring them into deeper communion with Jesus, not to cultivate a private spiritual achievement.

Teaching movement three

Invite people to review their Rule of Silence. Ask whether it fits their responsibilities, health, family, and season of life. A good rule is a trellis that supports living growth, not a rigid test of worthiness. Close with prayer for love of God and neighbor, and encourage participants to revisit their rhythm together after several weeks.

Questions for conversation

- What changed across twelve weeks?
- Which rhythm is realistic long-term?
- Who can encourage you to continue?

Guided practice and sending

Finalize and begin your Rule of Silence; review it seasonally.

Close by praying that the Word would bear fruit in patient attention, love, and obedience. Give participants permission to adapt the practice and to seek support if silence brings up distress.