

Picture the scene. You're standing nearby. A friend of yours has someone come up to them who starts making all sorts of obnoxious, false statements targeting them. Afterwards your friend comes over to you and says, "Why didn't you say anything?"

Picture another scene. You're seated near your friend. A fabricated, false lawsuit has been brought against them. So there you sit in a courtroom as the case is heard. You're not called on to say anything at the hearing. But after it is done your friend turns to you and says: "Thanks for your support. It meant the world to me."

You didn't say a thing in either case. You were just there. So why the different reactions from your friend?

[Allow for an answer from someone.]

Isn't this true? That...

- There are times when *silence is a failure* of friendship, or a failure to stand up for what is true.

And...

- There are times when *though silent* a person makes *a stand* for what they know is true – a statement of who they stand with is evident and known to those present.

In both cases, we see an important truth: there are instances a person "speaks"/communicates without even opening their mouth. Agreed?

Now think of your connection to Jesus, and think of the ways you face attack – ways you're under siege to follow the one (pointing to *failure to stand*) and give up the other (pointing to *making a stand for what is true*). That's the issue we're exploring tonight in our **Disciple under siege** topic of **Silence**. Sound like something relevant to our lives as disciples today? Yeah.

Let's start with the narrative of our Bible section, then move on to make application in our lives.

As we hear our Bible verses listen for which one of the two kinds of silence (noted above) we observe here in John 18:15-18. I thought I had an answer for that. But I had to take a step-back from my presuppositions and ask: "What do we know for certain, based on what God reveals here?" Take a look for yourself: [Read John 18:15-18](#).

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple kept following Jesus. That disciple was known to the high priest, so he went into the high priest's courtyard with Jesus. ¹⁶ But Peter stood outside by the door. So the other disciple, the one known to the high priest, went out and talked to the girl watching the door and brought Peter in.

¹⁷ "You are not one of this man's disciples too, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter.

"I am not!" he said.

¹⁸ The servants and guards were standing around a fire of coals that they had made because it was cold. While they warmed themselves, Peter was standing with them, warming himself too.

Ok, for the following statements that I'm going to project, [choose an answer: T, F, or WJDK](#). Everybody understand those options? T is for? *True*. F is for? *False*. WJDK is for? Maybe if we shorten it to the texting lingo "DK" it will help. DK is for? Don't Know. So answer WJDK if there is something [We Just Don't Know](#). Ok, statement #1:

- John was there when Peter spoke his denial of Jesus.

Answer: We DK. We don't even know if it was John. Even if we take it to be John, which I personally think is the case, the other gospel accounts indicate that Peter's denial in John 18:17 goes with the description in vs.18. | So though John is with Peter in vs.16, WJDK where John is at this time when Peter is gathered with others by the fire.

Let's do one more statement – T, F, or WJDK:

- John's silent presence during Jesus' trial is an indication of weakness or failure on his part.

Answer: WJDK. Though some come to this conclusion, others don't. And one small word in vs.17, which I had previously overlooked, tipped the scale for me personally on how I'm leaning on seeing John's (quote-unquote) "silence" during this time of Jesus' trial.

We hear right away in vs.15 that this other disciple, we'll take it to be John, was known to the high priest and obviously also to others there like the girl watching the door. But there is more known to those others about John than just his identity. He is known at the scene this night as being a disciple of Jesus. This makes sense, right? He was seen all over Jerusalem with Jesus. The high priest's servant girl shows that she knew this about John. It's in the question she asks Peter. It shows up in one little word: "too." The NIV didn't specifically bring out this word in its translation. You see, the servant girl wasn't just asking if Peter was a disciple of Jesus. She knew John was a disciple of Jesus, and was asking if Peter was also one of his disciples.

And so, with that snippet of info in view, we might very easily come down on the side of viewing John's presence during Jesus trial much like this conclusion I read: "it sets up John and Peter as two very different disciples [at this scene]. John is not at all secretive about the fact that he is a disciple of Jesus— even the high priest's servant girl knew this about him!"

And even if you're left wondering about how to take John's presence at this scene – because we don't have definitive word –, here's a place to land. A place from which to move forward. The People's Bible commentary on this section simply handles John's presence by leaving us with questions to ponder, questions like this:

"And John – why did he tell this part of the story of Peter's denial...?"

This seems to be the best approach to get at the application for ourselves. Leave the issue of John's silence posed in the form of a question. What that really can encourage us to do is: ask the kind of questions that will make concrete application for our lives. When it comes to the topic of "silence," what we do know – with certainty – are the ways we are under siege.

I said at the outset: Think of the ways you face attack – to follow the one (*silence as a failure of friendship or of standing up for truth*) ... and give up the other (*making a stand for what is true, even sometimes by presence*).

I know the different paths I'm tempted to take, and I know where I've failed and fallen to temptation. What are the different junctures where you have encountered temptations to be silent? Take a few moments. Either jot down or come up with a mental list. If you're with your child(ren), talk it through with them. [Pause, and resume reading after you're done.]

Did you have any examples like these:

- Tempted to be silent in a circle where gossip / lies are being spread.
Or more specific to tonight's account: to be silent where untrue comments are spoken about Jesus - about truths we know from the Bible.
- Tempted to be silent on social media, or while engaged in old-fashioned social interaction face-to-face.
After all there is no command at what exact times or for what exact amount of your time (percentage) you should talk about spiritual truths. So we're tempted to silence, to leave behind being ambassadors of God's truth, letting our light shine before men & declaring God's praises.
- Tempted to keep silent when on the receiving end of a comment implying "you're not also one of them" – meaning, a follower of *that Jesus guy* or a believing in those Bible truths like a 6 day creation of the world.

You hear a comment couched in derision, and you know there's the potential for more where that came from, if you speak up for the truth you know.

The prior topic in our disciples under siege series that I shared was "fleeing" from Jesus. "Fleeing" and "silence" that fails to stand up for what is true - both deal with fear. One *does something* in reply. The other *does nothing* in reply. But both have this in common: they are failures to follow God's will. The one: doing something God forbids. The other: failing to do something God commands.

We can't look at this topic without seeing and confessing the times in our lives when our silence has been sin. I could have spoken more often. I missed opportunities because I was scared of people's response, because I didn't want to receive ridicule, because I feared the potential tension it might insert into the moment or into future interactions with the person or people involved. I confess the good that I've failed to do - my sins of silence are one type.

Here's the good news. We don't walk away tonight weighed down by our past failures. What Jesus did this night (John ch.18) and the next day (Good Friday) assures us of that.

[[Look up Mark 14:60-62.](#)] We heard earlier tonight a time Jesus was silent too. Jesus was silent in reply to the false accusations brought against him. His silence is for a different reason. He doesn't run from God's will. He doesn't try to defend himself; he doesn't try to step away from all the shame and blame and punishment coming his way. He is silent as he goes about his task. He only speaks up to tell the truth of who He is: God the Son. And then He goes to complete the work for which He came: to take our sin and curse of hell. He took that all without complaint, or objection, all so that... He may loudly proclaim us as FORGIVEN at his death and resurrection.

That's the news that gives you peace. It means peace in your relationship with God: through faith in Jesus you have the complete peace of your sins all removed.

Something else brought about at the same time is this; it's brought through the same assurance. When I keep that relationship in view, that reality in view of the peace I have with God, it puts me at peace as I go into the world and let my connection to Jesus show. I'm strengthened with the assurance that Jesus has provided me a security that is eternal and priceless.

Every time I hear God's good news bringing that truth, it takes away the reasons I thought I had to fear. I'm freed from feeling that my security is dependent on what people think of me. I'm filled with joy to know my connection to Jesus provides my security. And I'm set free through that news to let shine my connection to Jesus and the joy it brings me. I'm given heart and strength to give voice for the world to know: the truth of what Jesus had done, the truth that I hold dear.

May the grace of our God give us strength, peace and joy that overflows in lives - lives that they shine with our connection to Him, reflecting His love and truth for all to hear and see!