



**Mission:**  
*To expand the intersection of intellect and spirituality while holding physical space in our busy world for prayer, introspection and study.*

## Silence is safe, but....

Is silence what God commands us to do? Should we remain silent or speak out? HSLC's Director of Music Ministries, John Sparkman, provides his review of "Interrupting Silence" to help us consider this concept.

### **"Interrupting Silence: God's Command to Speak Out" by Walter Brueggemann**

Review by John Sparkman, Director of Music Ministries

When I was a kid, nothing was more required of me in church except to do my absolute best to be as quiet as possible. When I think back to what it seemed was then required by God - according to my young parents - was to be silent. Along with this quietness, came an expected acceptance of everything I was taught as truth, not to be questioned, much less interrupted. This approach to God - and to the greater status quo - seeped into my understanding of what it meant to be a follower of Christ, unwittingly and subconsciously. Perhaps your upbringing had some similarities?

In prolific theological writer Walter Brueggemann's most recent book, "Interrupting Silence: God's Command to Speak Out," any ingrained notion of quiet, passive faith is challenged. Using passages from scripture as diverse as the ancient Israelites "crying out" to God to demand emancipation from Pharaoh, to Jesus' encounter in Mark's Gospel with a Gentile woman in who challenges Jesus that she is more worthy than "dogs under the table," Brueggemann makes an impassioned plea, story after story, that the Christian faith requires us to be bold and speak out. In seeking justice for others, for communities, and for people we don't know, Christians join a long line of biblical characters whose tenacity in speaking out was heard by God.

One of my great joys in the Holy Spirit community is that children are invited into questions, probably because it is antithetical to how I was raised. In a similar fashion, Brueggemann encourages believers of all ages to live into hard questions. Moreover, when answers do not align with God's desire for justice, equality, and peace for all, action is required. He challenges us to think that speaking out, in words and actions, with tenacity and forthrightness, is exactly what our faith and scriptures call us to do. I highly recommend this encouraging call for a bold and clear-voiced faith, that God's kingdom might become more fully realized in our world, here and now.

### **John is also currently reading or has recently read the following books**

*"The Common Good"* by Robert B. Reich

Reich makes the case for a generous, inclusive understanding of the American project, centering on the moral obligations of citizenship. Rooting his argument in everyday reality and common sense, Reich demonstrates the existence of a common good, and argues that it is this that defines a society or a nation.

*"Radical Spirit: 12 Ways to Live a Free and Authentic Life"* by Joan Chittister

Feeling burnt-out from life, strung-out from social media, and put out by a society that always wants more from you? Beloved nun and social activist Joan Chittister offers a practical, character-building, and inspirational guide to help you take control of your emotional life and redirect your spiritual destiny.

*"Poisonwood Bible"* by Barbara Kingsolver

A story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of it—from garden seeds to Scripture—is calamitously transformed on African soil. What follows is a suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa.

*"American War"* by Omar El Akkad

An audacious and powerful debut novel: a second American Civil War, a devastating plague, and one family caught deep in the middle—a story that asks what might happen if America were to turn its most devastating policies and deadly weapons upon itself.

*"Hillbilly Elegy"* by J.D. Vance

From a former marine and Yale Law School graduate, a powerful account of growing up in a poor Rust Belt town that offers a broader, probing look at the struggles of America's white working class. Hillbilly Elegy is a passionate and personal analysis of a culture in crisis—that of white working-class Americans.

Note: This is our first in a yearlong series of book reviews by Holy Spirit pastors and staff. All other book descriptions are from Amazon.com.