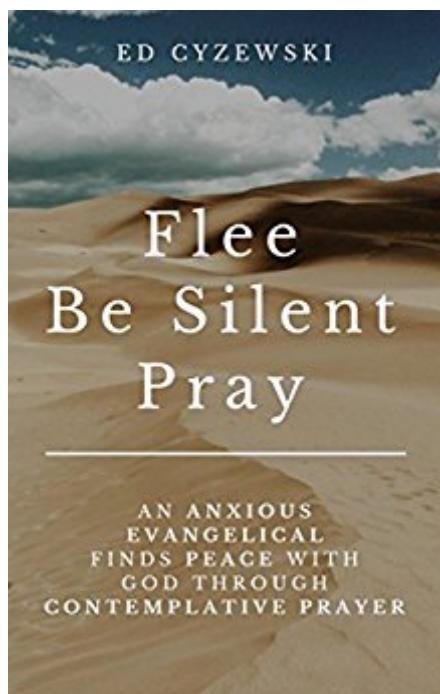


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# Flee, Be Silent, Pray: An Anxious Evangelical Finds Peace With God Through Contemplative Prayer



## **Synopsis**

When daily prayer and Bible study leaves a Christian anxious, doubtful, and frustrated, is there any hope for finding peace with God? Ed Cyzewski grew up in a restrictive Catholic Church, immersed himself in the hard-working world of evangelical Christianity as the path to knowing God, and then graduated seminary uncertain about praying or finding God. The Christian prayer tradition known as contemplation, primarily preserved in monasteries through practices such as centering prayer, was the answer he didn't want to find. If his Protestant faith was going to survive, he needed to move beyond his past grudges in order to learn Christian meditation and contemplative prayer from Catholic teachers. Contemplative prayer goes beyond the limits of Bible study and experiences the loving presence of God described in the scriptures. While scripture and spiritual disciplines have their place, Cyzewski learned that the unstoppable love of God forms the foundation of all Christian spirituality, and that daily contemplative prayer helps us rest in God's loving presence. Using Henri Nouwen's *The Way of the Heart* to highlight the three movements into contemplation with the words flee, be silent, pray, Cyzewski found what it means to quiet his religious anxiety by resting in the love of God. Anxious evangelicals and Christians on the brink of losing their faith will find an accessible path toward using this simple, proven approach to daily prayer.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

For the many who have lost their way or who are just struggling with the thought that God is far away if even aware, this excellent presentation of a contemplative road may touch you as it has me. it fits well with the idea of a 'long obedience in the same direction' with trust in the One who loves you more than you can imagine as the way forward. No it is not a microwave item that will quickly change you. No it is not a slippery slope threat to your faith. Rather, the author lays out the ancient path that is as fresh as today to walk in the moment at peace and in hope. The book is very readable and clear with references for those who wish to dig into the authors sources. Still, before i go into those sources, i plan to put into practice what is so clearly put forth so that i can get out of my head and at least be open to hear what He is saying in such a quiet way.

We want to be so close to the Lord and yet We try to make it quick and easy and don't give it much thought. Just sitting with the Lord and seeking him. I appreciate the authors journey and how we can begin or continue our own with "Just a Closer Walk With Thee". Every minute of every day.

This book was very informative and thought provoking. I am on somewhat the same path as the author, and I am thankful that he took the time and made the effort to record his journey for the rest of us seekers.

Great for those getting their feet wet in the contemplative prayer movement and the experienced who would like new insight by another prayer warrior's journey.

I have had a similar journey to Ed yet I found I learned a lot from the ways of prayer and suggested ways of prayer. I highly recommend it

I was excited to receive a copy of this book and couldn't wait to read it and share it with others. But presently, my life is very full (whose isn't!?) with a toddler and a baby at home and all of the other fun plates to juggle. And I'm lucky if I have a chance to read a few pages a day. Thankfully, this is the kind of book that one can read a few pages at a time and they will definitely walk away with much to think about. I am thankful to have this book as my spiritual guide

for the summer. And it's a treasure I'll return to for years to come. When I received "Flee, Be Silent, Pray" I found myself stressing to read it in its entirety as soon as possible, so I could write a comprehensive review right away. One page in, I realized that is exactly \*not\* what Ed would have me do. That is the kind of humble person he is. That is how you know he stands by what he is sharing in this book. The entire premise is we have an invitation to experience God in a whole new way. ("New" actually meaning drawing from the richness and depth of spiritual practices that have been practiced for many years but have recently been drowned out or forgotten by modern day Christianity). And yet Ed is gracious in all of this.

Celebrating the gifts he has received from all seasons of his spiritual life. Offering to us his own life story and practices that have helped heal and shape him. There is a beautiful, life giving invitation to commune with God and one need not run themselves into the ground in anxious pursuit of that. Ed shares "we need more than commands, teachings, and obligations to live fruitfully as Spirit-filled followers of Jesus. We need God's transforming love" transformation and holiness proceed out of the peace and security of that love. At first glance, one might think this could become license to just sit on our laurels or not sacrifice with spiritual disciplines or service for God. But this book invites us to understand that when we are transformed by God's love, those very fruits WILL flow from our lives. And it will happen naturally and healthfully. As a friend of the Cyzewski family, I can personally attest to this. For three years my family had the gift of being in a spiritual community with their family. We watched firsthand how they embodied love and health in their faith, marriage, parenting, and friendships. They were some of the first people to invite my husband and I into this new way of experiencing God and we are so thankful for that short but formative time. My family has since moved to a small rural community. One where the unofficial slogan at our local church is "Work Hard, Play Hard, Study Hard." You can imagine what a gift (life line!) this book is to remind me that there is a beautiful and sacred way to experience God and it doesn't need to entail totally burning myself out, or sacrificing the health of my family in that process. As a Christian counselor, I see the effects of burnout-whether spiritual or vocational all the time. I am so thankful for this resource to share with my clients. Already I can see the palpable sense of relief when I share with them that another way is possible. My small town (and this country for that matter) is so hungry for authentic ways to encounter God's rest, love and transformation. I can't help but think there is an exciting spiritual revolution happening, with books such as "Flee, Be Silent, Pray" at the forefront.

Thank you, Ed, for sharing your stories and practices with us.

If you've read any of the books by writer and editor Ed Cyzewski, you know that (1) he has often wrestled with his faith; (2) over a period of some years, he moved from a Catholic faith to an evangelical one, including a seminary degree; (3) he found his evangelical faith and church to be legalistic and as much focused on doing as the Catholic church had emphasized works; and (4) he has wrestled, and continues to wrestle, with his faith through writing and through prayer. But the prayer he uses isn't what many evangelicals (or Catholics, for that matter) are familiar with. It's the contemplative prayer of the church fathers and the desert fathers. This is prayer that is a spiritual exercise and engagement. It is prayer that is part of a process that's been used by Christians for more than 15 centuries. Something old is new again.*Flee, Be Silent, Pray: An Anxious Evangelical Finds Peace with God through Contemplative Prayer* is Cyzewski's description and explanation of how he is deepening his faith. The title is taken from a saying by Abba Arsenius (350-445 A.D.), also known as Arsenius the Great. He was a tutor for the Roman imperial family until he became an anchorite in the Egyptian desert, and he is particularly known for his writing on contemplative prayer. What Abba Arsenius said was this: *Flee, be silent, pray always, for these are the sources of sinlessness.* Cyzewski walks through each of those steps, telling his own story of how he discovered and utilized contemplative prayer. One particular tool he found useful is what is called the *examen*, a process developed by St. Ignatius for prayer that both focuses and deepens. Contemplative prayer is something that all Christians, regardless of denomination, should understand and consider. Cyzewski struggles with his evangelical experience. His experience as an evangelical has not been my own experience; perhaps it's because I haven't had any experience with legalistic churches. It's this experience that has contributed to the *Anxious* part of the book's title. But the differences in evangelical experiences doesn't detract from the central message that contemplative prayer can be a good spiritual practice. Cyzewski is a writer, blogger, freelancer, and book editor. He is also the author of numerous books on faith, writing, and related topics, including *Creating Space: The Case for Everyday Creativity* (2012); *Pray, Write, Grow* (2015); *The Contemplative Writer* (2016); and *Coffeehouse Theology: Reflecting on God in Everyday Life* (2016). *Flee, Be Silent, Pray* provides a solid overview to an ancient Christian practice that is being rediscovered. And it tells a very personal story at the same time.

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*Flee, Be Silent, Pray: An Anxious Evangelical Finds Peace with God through Contemplative Prayer*

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