

Topic #1

*In the Old Testament we read that there is “a time to keep silence and a time to speak” (Ecclesiastes 3:7). What is the value of silence and quiet time in a time when we are always “plugged in”?*

Everyday at 6 AM my alarm clock rings and everybody hustles out the door. It's such a crazy, fast paced life that we are constantly trying to push a little harder to get the upper hand. There's so much to do in such little time. How many of us feel this way on a daily basis? Why is there chaos in our lives? It's the secular world that we live in. We are constantly plugged in and connected at all times. There isn't a moment in school that I do not see students' texting or snap chatting. Our phones have become an extension of ourselves. We walk around with our phones in our hands; we would never imagine leaving the house without them. We need to be in the know. But what are we truly doing? We are not communicating in a healthy way. Instead we are passing judgment and gossiping through social media. The result is peer pressure and bullying that makes us conform to this secular world, but as Christians we are called to be transformed. John 15:19 states, we are called to be “in the world, but not of the world.”

Romans 12:2 states “Do not conform to this world, but be transformed.” Unfortunately everyone is conforming around me. At school I've noticed kids are making bad decisions. They are posting fights, taking inappropriate pictures of themselves, using bad language, and doing drugs. Jesus is no longer at the center of people's lives. There is not enough time to think about Jesus when people are spending countless hours surfing the web or tweeting. We are constantly exposed to negative images and inappropriate behavior that has become the norm. We have become a short tempered and anxious generation. Only Jesus can save us and take us out of this darkness. In John 12:35 states “Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.” How do we transform and turn to Jesus in this demonic world? It's easy; we need to unplug, to put our phones down. This year, I have encountered things in High School that I never thought imaginable. I was harassed by a classmate and bullied by a teacher. There were times that I felt hopeless and alone, and every time my mother would say, have you prayed? She was right, all I needed to do was stop, take a deep breath, and pray. Every time without fail, my situation was miraculously resolved. This year, I learned the power of prayer and that God is faithful to those who are in need when they pray with persistence. Luke 11:9 states “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

At school I am a member of the Show Choir, which is a competitive dance and singing team. We travel to other schools to compete. This year we competed in Windsor, Connecticut. At the competition right before awards were announced I saw one of the groups sit in a circle, hold hands and pray. That was such a beautiful moment to see peers praying to God. They didn't care that they were in a public high school. They were strong enough to unplug and to pray to God, and they looked calm and at ease. I learned a lot from them that day. They are the true example of being transformed and being persistent in their faith. Sometimes all it takes is a ten minute break with Jesus. Even though chaos calls us, we need to fill ourselves with God's peace and ignore the world around us.