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Feeling the Silence: Welcoming Wisdom into the Male Soul

by Charles A. Kohl

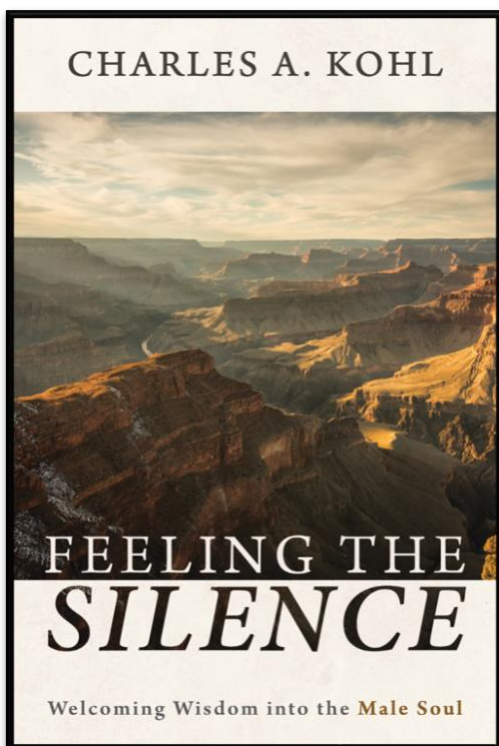
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New Title from Charles A. Kohl

Feeling the Silence: Welcoming Wisdom into the Male Soul



Men need encouragement to know it is okay to be open and vulnerable to the intimate relationship God is calling all of us to experience. This collection of poems, psalms even, affirms for men in particular, and all of us in general, that weakness, brokenness, love, elation, and joy are all valid states of being and are meant to be shared.

Every cultural revolution begins with first steps. Certainly, this collection is not the first step in creating a culture that embraces men's needs for intimacy, but it is a step. It's a hopeful step that will lead more men toward intimacy with God and, through that journey, bring more peace, love, kindness, tenderness, mercy, and justice to our world.

Charles A. Kohl is just a regular guy plugging away in corporate America trying to contribute to his family's well-being. A father to four grown children, papa to three grandchildren, Charles finds much joy in spending time with them. He and his wife of thirty-two years, Kathy, find their most intimate time together, where they find God together, during informal walking tours of their hometown, Cincinnati, Ohio.



What is your motivation for writing *Feeling The Silence*?

I really want men to know it's okay for us to be vulnerable and open to intimacy with God. For some of my adult life I've felt resistance in my circle of male friends to be really open and honest in each others' presence. I have seen that closed approach to intimacy reveal itself in anger, rage, and other abusive behavior. I hope my example will help some men be more open to love and relationship with God and help them change their approaches to life and love. It's important for men to know one does not have to be a mystic, clergy, or scripture scholar to experience intimacy in relationship with God.

What has been an important influence on your life and your openness to intimacy in relationship with God?

The biggest influence on my being open to intimacy with God is my wife's example. She loves with such a big heart and has been so patient and loving with me as I came to understand happiness is not found in "climbing the corporate ladder" or earning as much money as I can. Also, many women leaders in my faith community have invited me to participate in their ministries: Adult faith formation and youth ministry in particular. It's under their leadership and formation the Holy Spirit has done much of its work.

Why is this work important?

I have given all readers, men, women, and those whose identity does not conform to cultural expectations, some examples of what can happen in a soul when one opens oneself to the overture of God's love. In this book I have revealed my lived experience of God and God's love for me. What I offer the reader is a very personal part of who I am learning I am.

You're writing from a Christian perspective. What can these poems offer to people who are not Christian?

It's very important, I think, not to put God in a box. It's important to remember we all have different approaches to life, love, and belief (and non-belief) in God. I think many of us just have different names for that movement of love and invitation to closeness and intimacy that draws us nearer to the source of life. Many of us have different names for our recognition of our connectedness to each other. I have revealed here the way God has chosen to reveal Godself to me. That does not mean God will reveal Godself to others in the same way. I hope my example will lead others to be open to how God wishes to reveal Godself.

Why “Godself” and not “his?”

This question speaks very much to our individual images of God. Ten years ago I may have used the masculine pronoun when referring to God because that’s what my traditional experience of God was. In my lived experience of God I’m learning that our traditional pronouns are not sufficient for me to express my image of God. Godself may not be sufficient either, but that word gives me better ability to express my image of God. I’m hopeful my use of the word “Godself” will encourage others to explore and experience their own image of God.

What comes next for you?

It’s important that I continue working to participate in supporting my household. While I’m headed into formal retirement from a traditional career track I’ll continue my formation as a Spiritual Director and find ways to transition into that work more or less full-time. I also plan to write another book related to the Camino de Santiago Pilgrimage. (Many pilgrims have their own book on the Camino experience. I might as well join the club!)

An Excerpt from *Feeling the Silence: Welcoming Wisdom into the Male Soul*

I trek the dark path to my soul
surrounded by bent trees, branches reaching.
Autumn leaves, forced from their security,
crunch under my feet
as the trail winds and wends to the ridge.
The moon, Your lantern, lights my way.
Moonlight and trees dance rhythmically
as light and dark collide
then bounce off each other like echoes,
confusing my senses.
The elements, too, seem perplexed.
But I am at peace.

The view from the top of my wooded soul clears,
offering me passage into some depth of my being.
Your love's burning fire allows me to bask
in the radiance that beckons me even deeper.
Your flames rise, narrow and tall,
to lick the stubborn walls of rock and earth
that stand against it.
Your tender touch invites the deeper cold
to open and be warmed.
Near Your fire,
I feel the burn yet remain unscathed.
Like You, I am patient,
as we wait
for the wall
to surrender.

Praise for *Feeling the Silence: Welcoming Wisdom into the Male Soul*

“While many run from silence in our busy world, Charles Kohl has embraced this silence as a fertile ground to articulate images like biblical psalms that could lead men and even women to a greater intimacy with God. The subtitle for this collection of poems is quite accurate—feeling the silence really does welcome wisdom into the soul.”

—**Paul B. Macke, SJ, Jesuit Mission Coordinator, Jesuit Spiritual Center, Milford, Ohio**

“Drawing on his personal and pastoral counseling experiences, Kohl invites his readers through poetry and prayer to pay attention to feelings, movements, vulnerabilities, and relational challenges that can open a man’s world to deeper intimacy. . . . Spiritual seekers will find prayer themes of healing of wounds, surrender, and relational transformation in this book. Although *Feeling the Silence* is intended for men and their intimacy needs, women may also benefit.”

—**Fran Repka, RSM, Spiritual Director**

“These poems, and the prayers with them, come in dialogue with other spiritual writers and Scripture. It makes for an absorbing kind of book, full of surprises. Kohl takes risks on our behalf.”

—**Richard Bollman, SJ, Retreat and Spiritual Ministry, Cincinnati, Ohio**

“Chuck pours his very soul into these poems and then gifts them to us. I am grateful! There’s solid evidence here of ‘God in all things’ for those who might doubt that, especially men who may not know how to be vulnerable to the Spirit. There’s deep wisdom here as well, but be forewarned: this journey isn’t with a pabulum Jesus. There’s grit here, with lots of struggle, surrender, and hard-won insight through one man’s marvelously intimate friendship with God.”

—**Sean P. Reynolds, Cofounder, Mustard Seed Consultants**

“In his quest for intimacy with the God of love, Chuck has used spiritual writings of others he calls ‘launchings’ to guide him more deeply into prayer and into God. Here he provides fresh and sensual poetry to ‘nudge’ and ‘launch’ you men who are also seekers. Let these writings move you toward and into the God of love, who is eager to welcome you.”

—**Jane Casserly Myers, Director of Parish Life, Bellarmine Chapel, Xavier University**

