

# SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

## Solitude

Psalm 46:10

“Be still and know that I am God.”

### 1. Jesus Calls Us from Loneliness to Solitude

- Loneliness is inner emptiness, but solitude is inner fulfillment.
- Our fear of being alone often drives us to fill our time with noise and crowds.
- Jesus practiced solitude.

At once the Spirit sent [Jesus] out into the desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. (Mark 1:12-13)

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)

But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. (Luke 5:16)

Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them. (Luke 6:12-13)

When Jesus heard what had happened [that John the Baptist was beheaded], he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. (Matthew 14:13)

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (John 6:15)

- Jesus taught His disciples to practice solitude.

Because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, [Jesus] said to [his disciples], ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. (Mark 6:31-32)

Jesus said to his disciples and a crowd of people: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. (Matthew 17:1-2)

## 2. Solitude Has More to Do with Our Inward Condition than Our Outward Location

- Solitude is an inward attentiveness of the heart that can be practiced whether in a crowd or alone.
- Practicing solitude teaches us to not fear being alone because we learn we are not.
- Practicing solitude teaches us to not fear crowds because we learn they can't control us.

## 3. Inward Solitude Has Outward Manifestations

- Solitude brings the freedom to be alone.
- Solitude should lead to meaningful fellowship and accountability.

## 4. Silence is an Essential Component of Solitude

- Practicing silence always involves listening to God.
- Practicing silence is about controlling the tongue not the absence of sound.

James 3:2, 6

Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

And among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.

Ecclesiastes 3:1,7  
For everything there is a season,  
a time for every activity under heaven...  
A time to be quiet and a time to speak.

- Practicing silence helps us avoid pointless religious talk.

Proverbs 25:11  
Timely advice is lovely,  
like golden apples in a silver basket.

Ecclesiastes 5:1  
As you enter the house of God, keep your ears open and your mouth shut. It is evil to make mindless offerings to God.

- Practicing silence requires deep trust in God.

Isaiah 53:7  
He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was **led like a lamb** to the slaughter. And as a sheep is **silent** before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

1 Peter 2:23  
He did not retaliate when he was insulted,  
nor threaten revenge when he suffered.  
He left his case in the hands of God,  
who always judges fairly.

## 5. Solitude Prepares us to Faithfully Endure Seasons of Darkness

Isaiah 50:10-11  
Who among you fears the Lord  
and obeys his servant?  
If you are walking in darkness,  
without a ray of light,  
trust in the Lord  
and rely on your God.  
<sup>11</sup> But watch out, you who live in your own light  
and warm yourselves by your own fires.

This is the reward you will receive from me:  
You will soon fall down in great torment.

2 Corinthians 4:8-10

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. <sup>9</sup> We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. <sup>10</sup> Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

Matthew 27:46

At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

## 6. Practical Steps for Practicing Solitude:

- Take advantage of the small moments of solitude in your day.
- Designate a quiet place for practicing solitude.
- Practice speaking fewer, more meaningful words in a day.
- Experiment with speaking no words in a day.
- Try scheduling 4 times a year to withdraw for a few hours to reevaluate your life and reorient your goals.
- Try to schedule a solitude retreat once a year.