



*Series: Survival Skills*

*Text: Matthew 3:13-16; Matthew 4:1-3*

*Part 5 – Silence and Solitude*

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This week in small groups, you will be practicing silence and solitude as a group. Repetition is key to building healthy habits. Remember, it's different from Bible study in that we let God speak through the text plainly rather than diving deeply into it. Follow the instructions below as you walk through this time together. Try to follow the time allotted for each section.

**1. Take deep breaths in and exhale slowly (Repeat a few times).**

Remember, research shows when we inhale and exhale (big breath in and big breath out) it activates the parasympathetic nervous system to relax our bodies.

**2. What are you thankful for today? (Spend 2 minutes in silence giving people time to reflect on this question. Then have everyone share. The members do not need to explain too much.)**

Share something concrete. We don't want generic answers like 'We're thankful for salvation.' While we are, we want to address something concrete for this section.

**3. Bible Reading as a Group (5 minutes).**

Have someone read any one of the passages below. As the words are being read, pay close attention to what words and ideas draw your attention in unique ways. When your focus is drawn to a particular word or thought, pause momentarily to reflect on them with specificity. After 3 minutes, read it one more time. Then pause for 2 minutes.

Psalm 23; Psalm 100; John 15:1-17; Romans 12

**4. Reflection (5 minutes).**

In light of the text, here are some questions to ponder: What do I need to know? What do I need to be? What do I need to do? What does this mean for my life today?

After the questions are posed, sit silently for the remainder of the time. It may seem like eternity, but try to focus on how God is speaking through the text. Then share how God is speaking through the relevant questions above.

**5. Pause (2 minutes).**

Pause to sit in God's presence before fleeing from the moment. You might express wonder, awe, gratitude, or praise through words, or you might allow yourself to feel and experience these things quietly before God.

## AFTER SILENCE AND SOLITUDE...Some additional group questions for discussions (Optional).

1. What was this silence and solitude exercise and experience like?
2. When you read Scriptures, do you feel as though you actually meet and connect with God? Why or why not?
3. What makes silence and solitude different than “Bible study” or a teaching?
4. What next steps can you take to make silence and solitude a regular part of your life rhythm?

### **EXTENDED SILENCE AND SOLITUDE**

If you'd like to participate in an extended period of silence and solitude. Here are the goals to aim for:

- Ideally 8 hours
- No phone, email, TV, work, etc.
- Find a spot where you can be alone and uninterrupted. If possible, go away to the beach, park, or retreat center.

Like most things in life, this is going to take some planning. It will not be as fruitful if you just show up and sit for 8 hours. The following is a suggested schedule for how to spend the 8 hours:

**8 – 9 AM:** Prepare your mind and heart, take a walk, or do whatever will help you set aside concerns over tasks and responsibilities. Try to arrange your morning so you can remain in silence from the time you wake up.

**9 – 11 AM:** Read and meditate on Scripture, taking time to stop and reflect when God seems to be speaking to you through the text.

**11 AM – 12 PM:** Write down responses to what you have read. Speak to God about them.

**12 – 1 PM:** Eat lunch and take a walk, reflecting on the morning.

**1 – 2 PM:** Take a nap.

**2 – 3 PM:** Set goals that emerge from the day's reflection.

**3 – 4 PM:** Write down these goals and other thoughts in a journal. Thank God for your time together and ask if there is anything else he wants to say. Prepare to enter back into the flow of life.

Note: If 8 hours isn't doable, that's ok! Make it smaller. If you have little kids, this can feel impossible. It's not. Just get creative. Ask somebody in your community to babysit while you retreat. If they can't, try splitting your sabbath or day off into two 4 hour chunks. But if you're able to do 8 hours, give it a try. It probably sounds daunting and maybe a bit scary. But it's more doable than you think.