

9 Spiritual Disciplines (10/11/26)

Part 1: Solitude is a Fortress

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Weekly Prayer Group: 9:30 AM Sundays, Noon & 6 PM Wednesdays.
- Fight Club: 10/24, 10/31 & 11/7 at 8:30 AM at the Church.

We embark on a new sermon series today in our discipleship; **9 spiritual disciplines** that will greatly aid us in making the move from being believers into following Jesus. They are:

1. Solitude DAILY!
 2. Prayer, thanks, praise & worship DAILY!
 3. Bible Reading DAILY!
 4. Self-examination & Repentance DAILY!
 5. Sabbath (doesn't have to be Sat).
 6. Controlling the Tongue
 - a. Glorifying God
 - b. Edifying the Saints
 7. Witness/Testimony to unbelievers.
 8. Community/Gathering of Saints & service
 9. Tithing/Offering/Generosity
- The first 5 are INTERNAL, the most important.
 - The last 4 are EXTERNAL, glorify God, expand the Kingdom, and earn an ROI for Jesus.
 - The first 5 are the foundation—the stronger it is, the more sound/solid the building.
 - The last 4 are the building and depend on the first 4.
 - Trying to do the last 4 without the first 5 is like going jogging on a hot day with no water or stretching.
 - Results are burn out, resentment, moral failure, frustration, etc.
 - You hear about some famous minister preaching and laying hands and he's caught in a major moral failure. Or a worship leader producing God-exalting songs and albums suddenly caught in major sin.
 - How could this happen? Just explained it.
 - The first 5 build holy character and produce the fruit of the Spirit, preparing and equipping a disciple to "do" the last 4.

TODAY we talk about the most important of all the above: SOLITUDE.

The first of the 10 commandments is “thou shalt not have any other gods before Me.”

- The remaining 9 commandments can only be obeyed when we do the first one.
- The remaining 9 commands hang on the 1st one.

Jesus boiled all 10 down to these 2: “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The second is to love your neighbor as yourself.” The 2nd command hangs on the 1st one: we cannot love the brethren/sistren without loving God first.

Solitude is a fortress, a resting place, a shelter that we enter into the meet with Jesus. It’s our one-on-one time with Him. There is NOTHING more important than this and yes: that includes your wife, husband, kids, job, or pets.

Our relationship with Christ comes before everyone and everything else in our lives.

Let’s begin with how important solitude with God is: Jesus IS God and was God in human form when He came here 2000 years ago:

Colossians 2:9: “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.” (NIV)

(KJV: “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”)

Jesus never sinned, walked on water, raised the dead, healed the sick, cast out demons, and even told Satan himself to take a hike and he did. Yet despite all these things look what Jesus did:

[Mar 1:35 NKJV] – 35 Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and **departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.**

If Jesus, Who was God in the flesh, ***needed to have solitude with God our Father***, then so do we.

[Luk 6:12 NIV] – 12 One of those days Jesus went **out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.**

If Jesus, Who had all power over the devil and his demons, needed alone time with Yahweh, **we do too.**

Look what Jesus does right after His cousin, **John the Baptist, is executed:**

[Mat 14:13 NIV] – 13 When Jesus heard what had happened, **he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place.** Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns.

The crowds don't let Him have privacy, so He ministers to them. After He gets done, look what He does:

[Mat 14:22-23 NIV] – 22 Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. 23 After he had dismissed them, **he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,**

If the same Man Who calmed the storm with a word and raised the dead **needs one on one time with the Holy Spirit, so do we.**

He famously asks His disciples **“Who do the crowds say I am?”** and then “Who do you say that I am?” Look what happens moments before these famous questions:

[Luk 9:18 NIV] – 18 Once when Jesus was **praying in private** and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

If the One Who rose from the dead and then ascended to heaven in front of hundreds of witnesses ***took the time for solitude with God, then let us follow His example.***

When we're alone with God we talk to Him, and He talks to us.

This time spent with Him is preparation for life, whether day to day, or all of life.

- It's like having a strong cup of coffee to wake you up and start your day.
- It's like hydrating and stretching before any exercise.
- It's like packing before going on a trip.

Years ago I watched this documentary about **frontiersmen who spent months in severely harsh winter conditions in Alaska.** The part that I remember is them needing to take baths, but the temps are always well below zero. They built a sauna and got it up and running, then chopped a large hole in the ice. They went into the sauna until they were really hot, jumped into the frigid waters and washed themselves.

I remember watching the first guy jump into the icy hole and I cringed, but he had this big smile on his face the whole time he was splashing the water on himself. *“This feels great!”* he shouted while he twirled around in the stream. *The sauna was their preparation—had they just jumped in without it....*

Solitary time with Jesus is our preparation for everything. Here we are trying to swim in freezing cold water of life w/o having us some Jesus first and we wonder why too many things are going wrong. Church is only 2 hours one day a week, but even that isn't solitude with the Lord—it's corporate.

Scientists have done studies on the benefits of solitude with God in prayer and the results are fascinating.

First I'll share *results of solitude ALONE...with no prayer:*

- **Emotional deactivation and stress reduction:** Laboratory experiments (participants alone for 10–15 minutes) show reduced intensity of high-arousal emotions—both negative (anxiety, tension) and positive (excitement). Diary and experience-sampling studies find that more daily solitude time correlates with lower stress and greater autonomy satisfaction (feeling free and authentic), especially when the time is chosen. Benefits can accumulate across days.
- **Calm, reflection, and well-being:** Positive solitude is associated with lower depression, higher life satisfaction, mindfulness, and peaceful mood. Narrative and longitudinal work across ages links autonomy-motivated solitude to better emotional outcomes. Awe experiences can foster more positive attitudes toward solitude and improve spiritual well-being. [Nature](#)
- **Creativity and cognitive processes:** Solitude activates the brain's default mode network (linked to mind-wandering and self-referential thought), which supports creative insight, problem-solving, and self-reflection. Research associates preference for solitude with higher creativity in some populations. Brief quiet periods have been linked to improved memory recall in certain studies.
- **Physiological/restorative aspects:** Chosen solitude overlaps with deep rest practices (nature, quiet hobbies), which research connects to nervous system recovery, reduced inflammation markers, and potential cellular benefits (e.g., related to telomere or mitochondrial function under lower chronic stress). Overuse of constant stimulation (digital devices) is linked to reduced default-mode connectivity and interoceptive awareness.

Now let's see what **additional benefits come when we add prayer to the Lord** with our solitude:

- **Reduced depression, anxiety, and improved coping/optimism:** Observational studies (including reviews of ~40 clinical studies) link frequent private prayer to lower depression and anxiety, plus better optimism and coping. One small RCT (person-to-person prayer sessions) found significant improvements in depression and anxiety scores lasting at least a month, with increased optimism, though cortisol levels did not change significantly. [Tandfonline](#)
- **Stress reduction and cardiovascular effects:** Prayer can elicit the relaxation response (decreased sympathetic activity). Herbert Benson's classic work showed regular elicitation of the relaxation response (via techniques including prayer or meditation) lowered blood pressure in hypertensive patients (e.g., systolic drops of ~10 mmHg in one study of treated hypertensives). Other studies note slowed heart rate, respiratory rate, and improved heart rate variability in some cases.
- **Neurocognitive and pain effects:** Experimental studies using fMRI, EEG, or SPECT show changes during prayer, including activation in areas linked to social cognition and self-referential processing (e.g., medial prefrontal cortex, temporoparietal junction) during personal/improvised prayer among believers. Some studies report improved attention control, mental functioning, and greater pain tolerance (e.g., longer ice-water immersion). One review of eight controlled experimental studies found objective neurocognitive or physiological changes in most. [Degruyterbrill](#)
- **Broader well-being links:** Large reviews of religion/spirituality (hundreds of studies) find frequent associations with higher well-being and lower depression, though effects depend on the type of prayer (positive emotional prayer helps more than anxious or petitionary styles). Negative emotions during prayer or certain beliefs can correlate with worse outcomes. [Pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih](#)

Now that we've laid all this out, *let's go back to the times* I already shared in this sermon *when Jesus sought solitude* and we'll see a fascinating pattern: **He did so in preparation for the Kingdom work He came here to do.** Let's start with Mark 1:35

[Mar 1:35-39 ESV] – 35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 And he said to them, "**Let us go on to the next towns, that I may**

preach there also, for that is why I came out." 39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

Only after alone time with Father God did Jesus go out in public to preach and cast out demons. The next verse He cleanses lepers.

[Luk 6:12-16 NIV] – 12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

When was the last time we earnestly prayed about any of our relationships? Who we ought to be marrying, friends with, spending time with, working for or with? *Only after spending an entire night in solitary prayer did Jesus choose His 12 disciples!*

[Mat 14:23-25 NIV] – 23 After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, 24 and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake.

We marvel at the fact that Jesus walked on water...but He only did so AFTER He spent one on one time with His Father.

[Luk 9:18-22 NIV] – 18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" 19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." 20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "God's Messiah." 21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

Jesus is preparing Himself for the horrible string of events that end with His painful crucifixion. Guys I need to fast, pray, take deep breaths, bind, and loose before I walk into the DMV! I cannot imagine being arrested, beaten, betrayed, humiliated, and crucified! *What was His preparation for having to endure all this? Solitary prayer time with God His Father.*

Here is your assignment: starting today or tomorrow, separate a minimum of 30 minutes of alone time with God. 7 days a week.

- No phones
- No kids
- No pets

This will be harder for some than others to be sure, depending on your circumstances. Yet I say to you **that it's non-negotiable.**

- If you have to get in your car and drive someplace where kids can't tug on you and pets can't jump in your lap, then do it.
- If you need to wake up super early or stay up super late when everyone is in bed, do it.

Don't substitute anything. If it's Sunday and you're coming to church, don't substitute corporate worship and word with your solitude. I spend 30-40 minutes with God on Sunday just like Monday. If it's Bible Study night and you're planning on being there, that doesn't count b/c it's not alone time with Jesus.

Don't cut corners. Your drive to work is compromised solitary time because you're driving and your attention is rightfully on the road. No: ***sit down somewhere with no distractions and talk with God.***

WHAT TO DO. **I often start out with thanks, praise, and worship.**

- I thank Him for being alive, for my wife and 3 sons all being saved, for our church, anything I can think of.
- I praise Him for being amazing and all the great work He's done from the cross to something personal for me.
- I worship Him and tell Him He's the Lord, maker of all things, King of kings, high and lifted up! That's He worthy of honor, riches, power, and glory! That He reigns supreme above every principality and power and is named above every name!

I will ask Him to reveal anything to me I need to repent of—sermon coming up.

I go on to tell Him that He is enough. He is my inheritance, my portion, and my all in all! I bring my fears and insecurities before Him and tell Him they're in subjection to Him!

I tell Him He's my Source of everything good: love, joy, peace, everything!

I tell Him I love Him! I affirm that He loves me! That He takes joy in me! I thank Him for that!

I ask Him what He wants me to do that day, with my life, with everything. I ask Him to command me.

COMMUNION & PRAYER