

Spiritual Disciplines
Developing Habits That Will Change Your Life
Week 5: Silence and Solitude

Scripture

Various

Motivation (Why You Need This):

“Solitude, the state of being alone, is often considered one of the traditional spiritual disciplines. Many times, it is associated with silence. The idea is to be alone with God, to pray, to meditate on His Word, and to simply enjoy His presence. Some people use solitude to distance themselves from the distractions of the world, acknowledge the interior of their hearts, and hear God speak. Being alone can also be used as a time of rest and refreshment.” – Got Questions

Silence – the absence of sound or distraction

Solitude – the state of being alone

“Solitude is the creation of an open, empty space in our lives by purposely abstaining from interaction with other human beings, so that, freed from competing loyalties, we can be found by God” – Life with God Bible

Information (What You Need to Know):

Occasions Jesus Found Himself in Silence and Solitude...

▪ **Amid the Highs and Lows**

Mark 1:9 (ESV) In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” **12** The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. **13** And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

- Jesus identified with sinners in baptism and now in temptation
- Consider this – Jesus did not withdraw Himself, but was led away by God
- He was filled with the Spirit; therefore, setting aside use of His Divine power so He could face life as we do
- Silence and solitude can be a “wrestling” with God

■ After Grief or Hardship

Matthew 14:8 (ESV) Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” **9** And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. **10** He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, **11** and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. **12** And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus. **13** Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns.

- John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus, was beheaded
- The response of Jesus was to withdraw to a place of solitude

■ He Sometimes Chose Solitude Over Serving (Temporarily)

Luke 5:15 (ESV) But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. **16** But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

- Jesus had cleansed a leper and His fame began to spread
- His reaction in this moment was to withdraw and pray
- Solitude and silence seem to lead to strength (we often get this confused)
- Our strength should flow from our time spent with God

■ Before a Major Decision

Luke 6:12 (ESV) In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. **13** And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles...

- Jesus was about to choose His disciples
- His way to deal with a major decision was to withdraw and pray

■ After Hard Work and High Demands

Mark 6:30 (ESV) The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. **31** And he said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. **32** And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.

- Jesus set an example of what it meant to withdraw after a time of hard work
- Jesus’ disciples had been sent out for ministry and when they returned, Jesus led them to a desolate place to rest

Application (What You Need to Do):

How does silence and solitude work in real life?

- Find ways in your routine to look to Christ in the moment (minute retreats)
Susanna Wesley, mother of John (the founder of the Methodist movement) and Charles (the prolific hymn writer), raised a very large family and found it virtually impossible to experience physical isolation. When she needed silence and solitude, she'd bring her apron up over her head and read her Bible and pray underneath it. That did not block out much noise, but it was a sign to her children for those minutes that she was not to be bothered and that the older ones were to care for the younger.
- Set a goal of daily silence and solitude
“Without exception, the men and women I have known who've made the most rapid, consistent, and evident growth in Christlikeness have been those who develop a daily time of being alone with God.” – Donald Whitney
- Mark special places that are meaningful to you and the Lord (a room in your home, a place in nature, a church)
- Trade daily responsibilities (when possible) with friends or family members