



A Class on Spiritual Disciplines

# *pursuing* His Presence



# **What is the Purpose of Spiritual Disciplines?**



# What is the Key?

*“The word discipline has disappeared from our minds, our mouths, our pulpits, and our culture. We hardly know what discipline means in modern American society. **And yet, there is no other way to attain godliness; discipline is the path to godliness.** You must learn to discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.”*

*Jay Adam, Godliness Through Discipline*



# 1 Timothy 4:7

***gymnazō*** – to exercise vigorously, in any way, either the body or the mind

*Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather **train** yourself for godliness. – ESV*

*But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, **discipline** yourself for the purpose of godliness. – NASB*

*But reject profane and old wives' fables, and **exercise** yourself toward godliness. – NKJV*



*“You may have sought and tried to obtain **instant godliness**. There is no such thing.*

*We want somebody to give us three easy steps to godliness – the trouble is, godliness doesn’t come that way.*

***Discipline means work; it means sustained daily effort.** Continued daily effort is an essential element of Christian discipline.”*

*Jay Adam, Godliness Through Discipline*



# **Pursuing God Through Solitude**

*Week 4*



**How would you define  
the Spiritual Discipline  
of Solitude?**

**Do you regularly  
practice Solitude?**

# ♥ Definition of Spiritual Solitude<sup>1</sup>

*Solitude is the discipline that calls us to consciously pull away from everything else in our lives, including the company of other people, for the purpose of giving our full and undivided attention to God.*

<sup>1</sup><https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/how-to-practice-solitude/>



**True or False?**

**Solitude is just for  
introverts**



# Scripture on Solitude

*“**Be still**, and know that I am God.” – Psalm 46:10*

*“For God alone, O my soul, **wait in silence**, for my hope is from him.” – Psalm 62:5*

*“<sup>1</sup>For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven ...  
<sup>7b</sup>**a time to keep silence**, and a time to speak” – Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b*

*“<sup>25</sup>The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.*

*<sup>26</sup>It is good that one should **wait quietly** for the salvation of the Lord.*

*<sup>27</sup>It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

*<sup>28</sup>Let him **sit alone in silence** when it is laid on him.” – Lamentations 3:25-28*



# First World Problems

*“Silence and solitude are not twentieth-century words ... we have become a people with an aversion to quiet and an uneasiness with being alone.”*

*Jean Fleming*

*Finding Focus in a Whirlwind World*



# First World Problems

*“There is one major difference that has occurred in the past forty years that does indeed impinge upon the spiritual life. I can state it in one word: **distraction. Distraction is the primary spiritual problem in contemporary culture.** Frankly, when we are perpetually distracted, we are unable to discern the voice of the Lord.”*

*Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline*



# **What Hinders Your Solitude?**



# Word of the Day: Sedatephobia

*The intense, irrational fear of silence, where lack of noise can cause panic attacks.*

*Many people are afraid of or uncomfortable with silence, because it forces introspection, bringing up difficult thoughts, emotions (like loneliness or anxiety), or truths they'd rather avoid, especially in our noisy, distraction-filled modern world. **This fear stems from a learned behavior of constant background noise and an aversion to facing one's inner world,** leading people to fill quiet moments with media or small talk to avoid discomfort or judgment.*



# Benefit of Solitude

*“Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life ... we do not take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside some time to be with God and listen to him.”*

*Henri Nouwen,*

*The Spiritual Life: Eight Essential Titles*



# Can you think of examples from the Bible of people who sought or experienced solitude?

Jesus on a mountain



Moses in the wilderness

Paul in Arabia





# Moses<sup>1</sup>



- Was a shepherd for 40 years in Midian after fleeing Egypt:
  - Was in the wilderness near Horeb when he saw the burning bush (Ex 3:1-6).
  - This period stripped him of his palace pride, transforming him from a rash prince into a humble, seasoned leader ready for God's call.
- Laid prostrate for 40 days after Israel's sin with the Golden Calf (Deut 9:10)
  - *Sometimes God allows long seasons of silence – not to punish us, but to shape us.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.backtothebible.org/post/walking-by-faith-moses-when-the-wilderness-builds-your-faith>

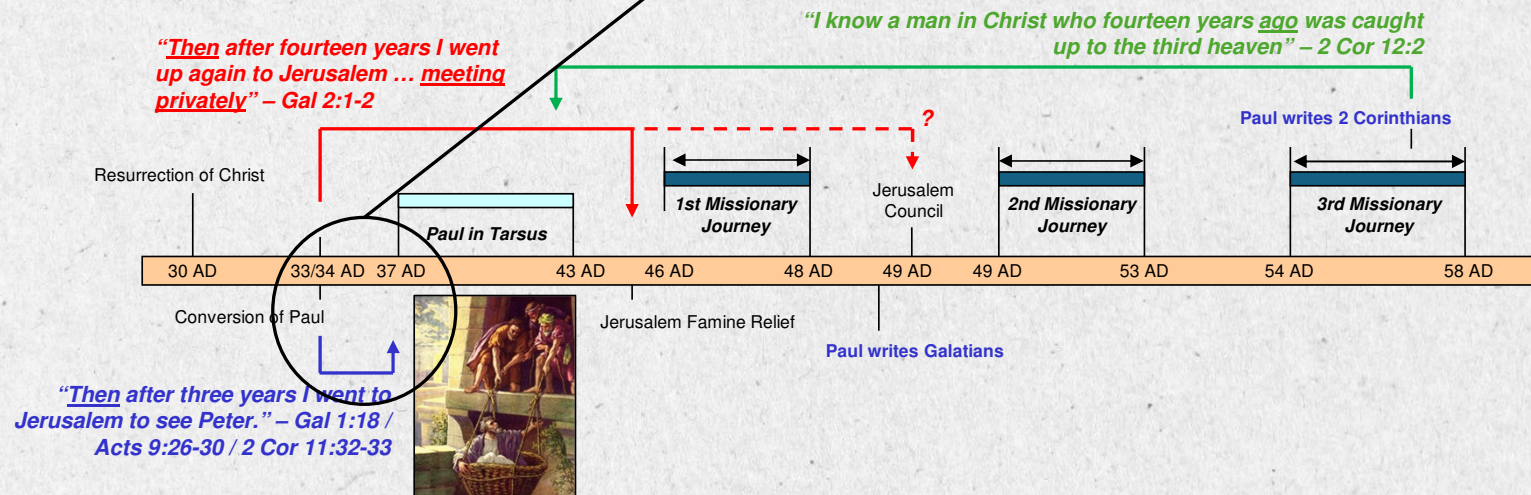


# Apostle Paul



## • Galatians 1:15-17

<sup>15</sup> But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, <sup>16</sup> was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, **I did not immediately consult with anyone;** <sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, **but I went away into Arabia,** and returned again to Damascus. <sup>18</sup> Then after **three years** I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.





# Paul's Time in Arabia<sup>1</sup>

*In the isolation of the Arabian desert, Paul had **uninterrupted time to study, pray, and reflect on his life.** His past was filled with zeal but not according to knowledge; now he faced the painful realization that he had fought against the very Messiah he longed for.*

*In Arabia, Paul examined his former beliefs, laid aside every prejudice and tradition that had shaped him, and sought God with deep sincerity.*

<sup>1</sup><https://bibleask.org/why-did-paul-go-to-arabia>



# **How did Jesus use solitude?**



## Interesting Fact

The Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as constantly on the move (“immediately” or “at once” used 39 times).

However, Mark also shows Jesus often seeking solitude (Mark 1:12-13, 1:35-37, 1:45, 3:7, 3:13, 4:10, 6:31-32, 6:45-47, 9:2, 14:32-42)

Jesus regularly retreated from the world.



# Six Times Jesus Chose Solitude<sup>1</sup>

- #1 Jesus used solitude to prepare for a major task:

*erēmos* - solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited region

*“<sup>1</sup>Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the **wilderness** to be tempted by the devil. <sup>2</sup>And **after fasting forty days and forty nights**, he was hungry. <sup>3</sup>And the tempter came and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.’” – Matthew 4:1-3*

Matthew is clear that he fasted 40 days before he was tempted

***Application for us Today?***

<sup>1</sup><https://toeverynation.com/6-times-when-jesus-chose-solitude-over-people/>



# Six Times Jesus Chose Solitude<sup>1</sup>

- #2 Jesus used solitude to recharge after hard work:

*“<sup>43</sup>And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. <sup>44</sup>And those who ate the loaves were **five thousand men**. <sup>45</sup>Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>46</sup>And after he had taken leave of them, **he went up on the mountain to pray.**” – Mark 6:43-46*

*“<sup>42</sup>And when it was day, he departed and went into a **desolate place**. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them.” – Luke 6:42 (after healing people in 6:31-41)*

**Application for us Today?**

erēmos

<sup>1</sup><https://toeverynation.com/6-times-when-jesus-chose-solitude-over-people/>



# Six Times Jesus Chose Solitude<sup>1</sup>

- #3 Jesus used solitude to mourn:

*“<sup>8</sup>Prompted by her mother, she said, ‘Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.’ <sup>9</sup>And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. <sup>10</sup>He sent and **had John beheaded** in the prison, <sup>11</sup>and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother ... <sup>13</sup>**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.” – Matthew 14:8-13*

erēmos

***Application for us Today?***

<sup>1</sup><https://toeverynation.com/6-times-when-jesus-chose-solitude-over-people/>



# Six Times Jesus Chose Solitude<sup>1</sup>

- #4 Jesus used solitude before making an **important decision**:

***“<sup>12</sup>In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. <sup>13</sup>And when day came, he called his disciples and **chose from them twelve**, whom he named apostles: <sup>14</sup>Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, <sup>15</sup>and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, <sup>16</sup>and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”** – Luke 6:12-13*

***Application for us Today?***

<sup>1</sup><https://toeverynation.com/6-times-when-jesus-chose-solitude-over-people/>



# Six Times Jesus Chose Solitude<sup>1</sup>

- #5 Jesus used solitude in times of distress:

*“<sup>39</sup>And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup>And when he came to the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’ <sup>41</sup>**And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed,** <sup>42</sup>saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’” – Luke 22:39-42*

***Application for us Today?***

<sup>1</sup><https://toeverynation.com/6-times-when-jesus-chose-solitude-over-people/>



# Six Times Jesus Chose Solitude<sup>1</sup>

- #6 Jesus used solitude to focus on prayer:

*“<sup>15</sup>But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities.*

*<sup>16</sup>But he would withdraw to **desolate places** and pray.” – Luke 5:15-16*

erēmos

*“<sup>23</sup>And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. **When evening came, he was there alone.**” – Matthew 14:23*

***Application for us Today?***

<sup>1</sup><https://toeverynation.com/6-times-when-jesus-chose-solitude-over-people/>



# Jesus's Secret?

- *erēmos* – solitary, lonely, desolate, uninhabited, wilderness, desert, deserted place, quiet place

*“We need not only look **to Jesus** but **at Jesus**. We must look at how he found rest, peace, and power for the unimaginable ministry before him.”*

*Patrick Wimberly, Acts 29 Network*



*“There is something both **appealing** and **transforming** about silence and solitude.”*

*Donald Whitney,  
Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*



## There is Something Toxic About our Modern Culture

*“The call is not to reject technology but to **redeem our attention** – to **pause long enough** to notice when our habits are pulling us away from our purpose. To resist the **shallow, numbing forces of the digital age** and pursue the deep life of prayer, reflection and true communion with God.*

*We must ask ourselves hard questions: **When was the last time I sat in silence without reaching for a screen? Do my habits of media consumption lead me closer to Christ or farther from Him?** Have I settled for a digital faith, curated for appearances but hollow at the core?”*

*Max McLean, Screwtape Letters Stage Actor*



# What If



WHAT IF WE LOOKED  
AT OUR **BIBLES** AS  
MUCH AS WE LOOKED  
AT OUR **PHONES**?



**BIBLE > PHONE**



# Practical Suggestions<sup>1</sup>

- Three things to consider when practicing Solitude:
  1. Solitude doesn't require **silence**:
    - While silence almost always requires solitude, solitude does not necessarily require silence.
    - We can use our time of solitude for prayer, verbal meditation on Scripture, singing psalms or hymns of praise or any other form of “noisy” activity.
  2. Solitude does require **planning**:
    - Our lives tend to be filled with people and events, making it unlikely we'll accidentally stumble into solitude. Being alone with God requires planning.
    - Choose a place where you can be intimate with God and free from distractions.
  3. Solitude does require **time**:
    - On most days the best we can do is to get away alone for a few minutes, or perhaps an hour. We should cherish these times and guard them carefully.
    - Commit to finding creative ways to be alone with God for extended periods of solitude, ranging from a few hours to a few days.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/how-to-practice-solitude/>



# Danger of Too Much Solitude?

*The practice of solitude, like other religious practices, can be taken to an unhealthy extreme. **Solitude is not a place to live.** We are not to be hermits or cloister ourselves away from society. However, in order to fully enjoy our relationship with God and to fully participate in godly community, we must have times when we relate with God one-on-one.*

*GotQuestions.org*



Loneliness is inner emptiness.  
Solitude is inner fulfillment.

— *Richard J. Foster* —

AZ QUOTES



# Summary

- Start where you are at – not where someone else is:
  1. Try to incorporate Solitude into your daily activities.
    - Turn off the radio in your home or car
    - Walk or exercise with no ear buds
  2. Have something to write on.
    - When to-do's come to mind, write them down and move on – don't dwell on those items – dwell on what God is saying to you.
  3. Think subtraction – not addition.<sup>1</sup>
    - Think: What can I cut out of my daily schedule?
    - Social media, TV, leisure reading, etc
  4. It is not about performance – it is about drawing closer to the Lord.
    - Know your personality, season, and stage of life.

***Solitude is not an easy path, but it is the ancient path – the Jesus path – to a strong, deep, joyful, vibrant life with God<sup>1</sup>***

<sup>1</sup>The Solitude Practice, practicingtheway.org



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