

BEING

SERIES

40 days to being more like Jesus

BEING Series Week 4 - [Keystone Habit 4: Seeking Solitude]

February 4, 2024 - Pastor Jason Carter

Our first Good News Pillar (or Core Value) is: **Connect with God**

- **Would you agree it takes time to build relationship? Why?**

The goal of this week's Keystone Habit is to demystify this concept of solitude. Solitude is the practice of withdrawing to connect and engage God... away from distraction, a time to connect, to listen, to share, to be quiet. Intimacy in relationship is created through proximity, commitment and time.

- **Does this come easy to you? Why or why not?**

There is a difference between getting away and getting away to connect with God.

- **Explain**

Mark 1:35 NIV ³⁵ "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."

John 15:5-8 NIV ⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

- Jesus with an iPhone charger: an iPhone has infinite capabilities until it is out of power. You are no good if you do not recharge. I am your source. Many of the sources we go to recharge don't last or don't fully recharge. We get a bump but we find our battery, spiritual life, does not fully recharge.
- **How does this relate to our spiritual lives?**

This is God's desire that we learn to connect with Him consistently. It is a muscle we can train.

Mark 9:36 NIV ³⁶ "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

I wonder if Jesus looks at us the same way, even those of us who have been saved a long time.

Matthew 11:28-30 NIV ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

- **Have you ever had a soul-wearying time in your life?**

Jesus: "I will take on the burden, the weight and show you how to live."

Exodus 20:8-9 NLT ⁸ "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ You have six days each week for your ordinary work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God."

God brought them out of slavery to be with Him. God instituted Sabbath to remind them they were no longer slaves. reminding them of their new identity.

- **Have we become slaves to performance, fear, condemnation, people pleasing?**

We can enjoy hard work and being on mission but if not careful, we can allow things outside of us to drive us, even good things. Worship and rest are a privilege. A day to enjoy. It is the place we start from, not just make it to. **Explain.**

The practice of Solitude is supposed to be a reminder that my life comes from God and true life is found in God. And, that I need recharging and need a reset. Or maybe an attitude adjustment. Or maybe I need hope that day. He is our source and we must slow down to connect, to hear.

The story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10. **Jesus said, "You are worried about many things. Mary has chosen the better thing in this moment."**

It does not mean Martha was sinning doing what she had been gifted by God to be good at, BUT in this moment she needed to be still in His presence and stop working and worrying. This takes practice and awareness.

Life is hectic. Now it is not just work and its expectations, it is everywhere we go there is a pull. Noise. Influence. Demands.

Rest is rooted in trust. The more time we spend with someone, the more we know them and the more we trust them. Rooted in the truth that God is good, trustworthy, kind. He is for us. It is the practice of saying God you are good and I am your child. You are the Good Shepherd and will lead me.

- **Why is rest rooted in trust?**

- **Do you believe He is good, kind, and for you?**

"You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you." -St. Augustine

- What are the ways you connect with God in Solitude?
- Did you know God wants you to enjoy Him? What does that look like to you?
- If it seems foreign or awkward, how can you learn to be with God and enjoy Him?
- What are some ways to enjoy God in solitude?

How to start:

- **Find a time** What is a realistic time frame in this season of your life?
 - Think in both short time frames and longer time frames
- **Find a place:** What is that place. Name it now or you won't.
- **Turn off distractions:** What needs to be turned off? Can the people in your life really survive if you are unavailable for X amount of time? Be honest with yourself and Jesus about this question. We tend to think of ourselves as more vital than we should.
- **Be intentional about connecting:** What are ways you can do this?
- **In busy seasons or days, find small moments:** What can you carve out now in this busy season and how will you make it happen?
 - Small things done well become big things well done. It is like going to the gym: eventually muscles are discovered... over time 😊

Ideas for ways to spend your Solitude time:

- **Read the Word** - Maybe you read. Or listen to a passage. Maybe you think about a verse.
- **Ask God questions** and be still to listen
- **Worship** - music, candle, walk, work in the yard, fish, creativity
- **Breathe** - smile, praise, say thank you, slow down. Be in His presence
- **Sometimes silence.** Just learning to sit with God
- **Coffee** - favorite chair, out on the deck, work on the car
- **Go to a place** and meet with God
 - Pastor Jason: *I enjoy taking a walk, being creative, I may just sit and listen to music. I may read or watch something and process with the Lord*

- How do you connect with God?

***Try different ways; don't crush your soul with rules**

What is keeping you from meeting with God in solitude?

- **Busy?** Would Jesus say you look harassed and helpless?
- **Guilt?** Are there things keeping you from drawing near? Do you need to confess something?

- **Fear?** Are you afraid of what He may ask? Or that you won't be able to get everything done?
- **Not sure how?** Is this what will keep you from connecting?
- **Not intentional?** Are circumstances driving your time?
- **No desire?** Is it possible you have heart issue with God?
- **Tired?** Can you just sit with God, tell him thank you, breathe and receive?

If you can learn to connect with the Lord in solitude, you can learn to bring that connection back and connect with God when you are busy. But you have to be intentional in it. Explain.

Jonathan Edwards: "One aspect of a Christ-enamored heart is a gnawing ache to get alone with Him. "

Psalm 42:1-2 NIV "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

V. 7- Deep calls to deep; in deep need, the psalmist recognizes His deep need of God
-We have spiritual deficiency because we are not connecting to our Source

"You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless, until they can find rest in you." St. Augustine

- I believe our world, including Christians, has forgotten how to connect with God. Or prioritize connecting with God.

- Do you agree? How do you see it? Is it you?

Isaiah 41:18-19 NKJV "Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. ¹⁹ Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it, I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert."

Have a conversation with God to start:

- I desire to connect with you, Lord
- I desire to be with You
- I desire to find our rest in You
- Holy Spirit, help me to enjoy You
- Help me learn how to enjoy this life you have given
- Teach me to recharge with you and help me to be mindful of You
- Teach me Lord to release my cares and burdens to You