

Solitude

2024

PRACTICE*

Formation in the way of
Jesus



Solitude Practice #1

1. **Find a quiet place**
2. **Get comfortable**
3. **Identify a word that you can use to center your mind on God. This word can change over time. Examples of words that I have used include: Patience, center, peace, and love. And when your mind inevitably wanders, use that word to re-engage.**
4. **Set a timer for your allotted time.**
5. **Then invite God into the space.**
6. **When the timer ends, close with a short prayer or Scripture.**

Solitude Practice #2

Solitude Practice Adapted from Sacred Rhythms Ruth Haley Barton

"For God alone, my soul waits in silence. From Him comes my salvation." Psalm 62:1

"The Lord will fight for you.; you need only to be still." Exodus 14:14

- Choose a place that feels comfortable and safe for you, a place that allows you to be open and available to God: a favorite chair at home, your backyard, your care, anywhere!
- Sit quietly for a few moments, breathing deeply, becoming aware of God's presence with you and your desire to be present with God.
- Sit quietly at the base of the tree that is your life and begin to notice what is true about you these days. Don't rush or try to make anything happen. Let your soul venture out and say something to you that perhaps you have had a hard time acknowledging: Is there a particular joy you are celebrating? A loss you are grieving? Are there tears that have been waiting to be shed? A question that is stirring? An emotion that needs expression?
- Sit with what comes into your awareness, becoming conscious of God's presence with you in that awareness. Don't try to do anything with what you are knowing except be with it. (In other words, don't scare it away.) Feel the difference between doing something with it and resting with it. Feel the difference between trying to fight it and letting God fight for you. **What does it mean for you to be still and let God fight (or work) for you in this particular area?**

Practice this way of entering into solitude regularly until it becomes routine for you to begin your times in solitude by being quiet and letting your soul come out and then rest in God's presence. You will likely be surprised at what your soul wants to say to God.

Solitude Practice #3

Solitude practice adapted from Spiritual Disciplines Handbook- Adele Calhoun

- Spend 15 minutes or more alone with God. You can do an activity if you wish: Walk, run, drive, iron. Dedicate the time ahead of you to God.
- Set a timer so you don't have to think about it. If the timer goes off and you are enjoying your time alone, ask Him if He'd like you to extend it. Stay in that space until you feel the gentle blessing and release of the Holy Spirit.
- After the time is up, consider how it was for you to be alone with God. Was it hard? Good? Did God speak to you in any way? Consider journaling your experience or drawing a picture of how you feel.

Solitude Practice #4

Silence and solitude was incorporated into the life and ministry of Jesus as a rhythm. Again and again we watch Him teach, heal, minister to crowds and then go off by himself to the lonely places to pray. The Messiah himself needed this alone time to commune with the Father. He needed to pull away from the demands of life and people and allow his own soul rest. By this example, Jesus has given us a trail map to the only place we can find rest for our souls. He simply says "Come to Me... and you will find rest."

- Choose one of the following passages to sit with: Mark 6:31-32; Matthew 14:22-23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16
- Imagine yourself in the passage with Jesus as He goes off to be alone and pray. Ask Him if you can be His silent companion. Walk with Him to the spot, sit with Him, watch Him.
- What do you notice about Jesus? How does it feel to be with Him? Is this hard for you? Can you imagine His face as He sees you seeing Him? What is it saying?
- Consider journaling or drawing about your experience with Jesus in the lonely place.

More Resources and Ideas for Silence and Solitude:

- **Create a "solitude space."** It can be very easy to ignore the importance of physical space in our lives. However, there is something about setting apart (this is the basic definition of the word Holy) a specific space for the purpose of communing with God and protecting our soul. There are many ways to do this. Perhaps you have an extra room in your house that can be your solitude space. Maybe you have a garden or a spot in a local park. Maybe you don't have a lot of space, but you can switch things up: sit on the other side of the bed or the couch, dedicate one chair, or create a specific walking route that becomes your place to be alone with God.
- **Create a "solitude activity."** It can be helpful to transform something you already do into a time for solitude. Maybe it is a chore (washing the dishes), or it is the time you have in the car, maybe it's your exercise routine (running is a great way to commune with God). Many times we fill these activities with multi-tasking (watching TV, listening to a podcast, etc), but maybe there's an opportunity to turn off some of those noises and listen for God's voice.
- **Turn off your screens.** There is literal noise and then there's digital noise. Perhaps you decide to not check your phone for certain hours each day, or you have a "screen free" happy hour in your house. Be creative, but commit to a no-screen zone and see what happens in your soul!

Further Reading:

- Henri Nouwen and Ruth Haley Barton are two authors who have written beautifully and convictingly on the practice and importance of solitude. Check out these books if you are a reader!
 - ***Invitation to Solitude and Silence*** - Ruth Haly Barton
 - ***Invitation to Retreat*** - Barton
 - ***Sacred Rhythms*** - Barton
 - ***Reaching Out*** - Henri Nouwen
 - ***Out of Solitude*** - Nouwen
 - ***The Way of the Heart*** - Nouwen
 - ***Practicing the Presence of God*** - Brother Lawrence
 - ***The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*** - John Mark Comer