

Solitude

“Solitude is painful when one is young, but delightful when one is more mature.”

Albert Einstein

And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.”

Mark 6:31

What is solitude?

- Solitude is the removal of oneself from the noise and communication around us in order to listen to and wait upon the voice of the Lord.
- Solitude is both inward and outward

Why should we practice solitude?

- Jesus Christ modeled solitude
 - Before starting His ministry (Matt. 4:1-11)
 - Before choosing the disciples (Luke 6:12)
 - After performing miracles (Luke 5:16, Matt 14:23)
 - After suffering the loss of a loved one (Matt 14:13)
 - After times of work (Mark 1:35)

- Before going to the cross (Matt 26:36-46)
- Heroes of the Faith practiced solitude (often at the command of God)
 - Isaac (Genesis 24:63)
 - Moses (Exodus 3)
 - Elijah (I Kings 19)
 - Job (Job 38-41)
- Solitude benefits the believer
 - It renews and strengthens the believer
 Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up *with* wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary. Isaiah 40:31
 - It enables us to hear God's voice
 I will stand on my guard post And station myself on the rampart; And I will keep watch to see what He will speak to me, And how I may reply when I am reproved.

Habakkuk 2:1
 - It helps us tame our tongue
 He who restrains his words has knowledge, And he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise; When he closes his lips, he is considered prudent. Proverbs 17:27 - 28

- It heals us

“Cease striving (*be still, KJV*) and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”

Psalms 46:10

How do I practice solitude?

1. Start a journal and make a commitment
2. Set aside time to be alone
 - Be realistic
 - Be intentional
 - Be attentive
3. Limit your speech and increase your listening
Ask someone about themselves and then just listen without interrupting or trying to “add” to their story
4. Arrange for a solitude getaway up to 4 times a year
 - These can be as short as 2-3 hours and as long as 2-3 days
 - These can be far away or close to home

Retire from the world each day to some private spot, even if it be only the bedroom (for a while I retreated to the furnace room for want of a better place). Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God's presence envelopes you. . . . Listen for the inward Voice till you learn to recognize it. Stop trying to compete with others. Give yourself to God and then be what and who you are without regard to what others think. . . . Learn to pray inwardly every moment. After a while you can do this even while you work. . . . Read less, but more of what is important to your inner life. Never let your mind remain scattered for very long. Call home your roving thoughts. Gaze on Christ with the eyes of your soul. Practice spiritual concentration. All the above is contingent upon a right relation to God through Christ and daily meditation on the Scriptures. Lacking these, nothing will help us; granted these, the discipline recommended will go far to neutralize the evil effects of externalism and to make us acquainted with God and our own souls.

AW Tozer