

# DISCIPLINES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

May 2, 2021  
Week 3: Solitude  
Scripture: Psalm 40, 1 Kings 19:5-8

When we discipline our heart, soul, and mind, we grow in God's grace. This transformational process takes practice. When we work at these spiritual disciplines, we can experience peace, joy, and freedom. This week, Student Pastor Ryan Pearce focused on the discipline of solitude.

## Definition of Solitude

Solitude is the discipline of being alone and quiet with God. It is a practice of reorientation toward God. And to do it, we need to look for the little moments to be alone with God. To be still before him by quieting our bodies, minds, and hearts. If we want to be still, we will need to put aside distractions. A good way to do this is to get outside. When we cannot put aside the things that come up, embrace them like Jesus did. Take time to listen to your desires. And make sure that solitude doesn't take you out of your community but invites you into it.

## Introduction Questions

1. Silly Question: Would you rather spend the rest of your life alone or constantly next to someone?
2. Follow-up from last week: How did you study this last week?
3. Is solitude a regular part of your discipleship to Jesus? If yes, where? If no, why not?

## Solitude Questions

1. How does the idea of being quiet and alone with God feel to you? Exciting? Scary? Too busy?
2. When have you felt most comfortable being alone? Most uncomfortable? Why?
3. What are some of your "gaps" that you could practice solitude in? What do you fill your "gaps" with? Why?
4. What do you wish God would address with you if you spent time in solitude with him?

## Scripture Study Questions: Someone read Luke 4:42, another read Luke 15:15-16

1. Why do you think Jesus would regularly slip away to "lonely places?"
2. What role do you think regular silence and solitude played in Jesus' emotional health and spiritual life?
3. What challenges would Jesus have faced to carve out time to be alone with himself and God? Do you face any similar challenges?

## Challenge: Practice a Breathing Prayer each day

1. **Identify a time/place that works well for you.**
2. **In a place where you can't be interrupted, intentionally still yourself.** Quiet your body and mind before God. Recognize that the Lord is as near to you as your own breath. Release your thoughts by letting each thought go as you feel it come in. Focus on your breathing.
3. **Breathing Prayer:** Inhale God's breath of life; exhale all that weighs upon you. Take long, slow breaths (four counts in, hold for four, four counts out, hold for four, repeat.)
4. **Go as long as you can.** Start small with 1-2 minutes. Try to add a minute each day.
5. **Say thank you in prayer.**

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## Close in Prayer

### RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Below are some curated resources from the Renaissance Church staff that have been helpful in our journey through studying and growing in spiritual disciplines. These are just a few of the resources out there! To find more, check the bibliography and endnotes of each resource. That is where the true gold is found!

#### Spiritual Disciplines:

- *Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard J. Foster
- *Sacred Rhythms*, by Ruth Haley Barton
- *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

#### Prayer:

- *Discovering How to Pray*, by Hope MacDonald
- *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, by Richard J. Foster

#### Study:

- *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- *How to Read the Bible Book-by-Book*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- The BibleProject: This has great scripture study resources and is produced by a great scholar and pastor in Portland, OR. Helpful for setting the context, diving into specific passages, and providing personal encouragement.  
[bibleproject.com](http://bibleproject.com)

#### Solitude:

- *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, by John Mark Comer
- *Silence and Solitude*, by Ruth Haley Barton