



## SOLITUDE

Countercultural Practices | 7.27.25

Hunter Emmert

(The following text is automatically generated and has not been edited)

Hunter Emmert 0:00

Good morning. Good morning. So happy to be here this morning. Like Steve said, my name is Hunter, and I get to serve as the high school pastor here at Bent Tree. And since odds are, I haven't gotten to meet a lot of you, and I don't get to meet a lot of parents or real adults, and so I figured it's important for you to know at least one thing about me, and so I have a much better half named Elle, and together, el and I have two beautiful, amazing little girls named Ruth and Phoebe. Here's a picture of them. Ruth is the one standing, and Phoebe is the one mean mugging. That cupcake, that girl is a human garbage disposal. They are just the sweetest, the gigliest, the cutest children I have ever met. They also just so happen to be two of the loudest children I have ever met. 630 in the morning rolls around very quickly, and Ruth is in her bed, scream singing. Let it go from frozen and parents, you know, scream singing very different than normal singing. It's not as pleasant to the ears. And Phoebe is in her crib, standing up, hands wrapped around the bars of her crib, shaking the whole thing like she's a POW trying to break free very quickly after getting them up, we're at the breakfast table. Immediately, breakfast food is all over the place, like on the walls, on the table, on the ground, everywhere. Our dog is standing on the kitchen table eating off of one of their plates. Somebody is always crying. It's me, I'm the one crying most of the time. It's me. All that to say mornings in our house, they are not as peaceful as they once were. Mornings are a lot messier. They're a lot more chaotic, and they are a whole lot less rhythmic than they used to be, and it's all good stuff. Of course, they say you're going to miss this season. They say that it's hard to see on this side of things, but we'll miss this eventually, but it's still hard when you're in that season. And one of the difficult things for me is that I remember that this is not the way that it always used to be, right? I remember the years before children of waking up slowly drinking coffee however long I wanted to I wasn't an IV straight into my arm like I could take my time sitting on the couch to read my Bible uninterrupted, unlimited time to pray for my day and all the people I would meet. But now it is significantly more challenging to take that kind of time, and it takes a whole lot more intentionality to create a morning rhythm with God now than it used to. But even if you don't have kids, you likely feel this same tension of always having too much to do, not enough time, and certainly not enough empty space in your schedule to weave something else into your quiet time routine. I mean, you're juggling job responsibilities or dating or grad school or college, even finding time to get groceries is difficult, because everything else just so easily seems to take up all of the empty space in our lives, the very space that we were adamant that we were going to reserve just for God. But then we got busy, Henry now and an author and a priest famously put it this way, that without solitude, it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life, and that we do not take the spiritual life seriously if we do not set aside some time to be with God and to listen to him. A seventh century theologian put it this way, that all the unhappiness of men, it arises from one single fact, they cannot stay quietly in their own rooms. We have a fear of silence all of us, whether you're here this morning and you feel as though you're at the top of your Christian spiritual game or not, you know that there are some truths to these statements. There is something about silence and solitude. It just feels connective to God. It pushes back against all the noise and the busyness and the productivity of the world. There is something about just sitting alone in the quiet. It just feels spiritual, biblical. Biblical. That's because, I would argue that it is see in our culture today, there is so much noise and so much distraction around us. 24/7, we look at our phones. So much noise coming from our phones that they literally created a setting on your phone just to tell you how many hours you spend looking at that rectangle in a survey, it says that American teenagers screen time is between right now, seven and a half and nine hours a day. And adults, we are not much better. The average American adults screen time is six hours and 38 minutes a day. People have now. Created apps and written books and even created dumb phones, which are just pre iPhone iPhones, all with the goal of helping you have less noise and distraction in your life. And it is because we wake up to noise. We spend our days surrounded by noise,

Unknown Speaker 5:18

and we go to sleep with noise. At least we do. We have a white noise machine.

Hunter Emmert 5:25

We have become fully distracted, fully surrounded by noise coming from culture, the news, our phones, Netflix, video games, technology, social media, you name it, screens in front of our faces, music blasting in every room of our houses, kids yelling, dogs barking, movies playing so we don't feel alone. Noise has consumed our every day lives. It has surrounded us so much so that if we are not careful, noise can be the thing that we only ever hear. I don't know about you, but when I hear silence in my house, my brain doesn't go, Oh, that's nice. My brain goes, who's dead? Where's your sister? Like something must be wrong. It's too quiet in the house. But Jesus was not afraid of silence. In fact, Jesus embraced a spiritual practice known as silence and solitude, and he wove it into his daily rhythms. And so if you have a Bible this morning, go ahead and turn to Luke. Chapter Five. We have just a short text to get through. Luke. Chapter five, verse 15 and 16. If you don't have a Bible, it'll be on the screen behind me. Luke. Chapter five, verse 15 and 16. Here's what it says. Yet the news about him, him, meaning Jesus, it spread all the more so that crowds of people came to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. So where we pick up in this story is right after a man with leprosy had approached Jesus and begged Jesus to heal him of this disease. Jesus, spoiler alert, he does it. He heals this guy. He sends him out and instructs him not to tell anybody about what he had just done. And then we get to verse 15, which we just read. And again, it says, yet the news about Him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and be healed other sicknesses. So either the man who was healed was not very good at keeping secrets, or the crowd that witnessed the healing was not on the same page as Jesus about keeping things low key for his ministry. Either way, the news about Jesus, the hear the miracle, the healing that he had just performed, it begins to spread like wildfire, and things got really busy for Jesus. The pace picked up, and people began seeking Jesus out more and more and more. But then we get to that verse 16, which says, but Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. See all throughout the Gospels, we see this of how Jesus was consistently taking time to go away and spend time in the quiet, alone with his father in mark one verse 35 it's another example of this. It says very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, went off to a solitary place where he prayed again. In Mark six, Jesus invites His disciples themselves to go off to a lonely, solitary place to rest and to pray. This was not just a fun, cute character attribute of Jesus. Jesus was not an Enneagram five. Jesus was not a major introvert who just needed to recharge his overstimulated batteries after a long day casting out demons, healing the sick. There is something much deeper and more intentional here about why Jesus always was making time to retreat to these quiet places. That's because Jesus knows something about silence and solitude that I think we often miss, or at least choose to overlook. And if I had to guess, it would be that silence and solitude are the antidote to the chaos of busyness. See, silence and solitude is often the avenue in which God speaks to the deepest parts of us, the deepest insecurities, the deepest anxieties. That's where he chooses, often, to speak with us, and forms in us an intimate relationship with Himself, which it makes logical sense. I mean, think about any relationship that you have. The deepest relationship that you have was not formed and deepened because of avoidance. It was deepened and strengthened through intentional time together. And the same is true of our relationship with Jesus. If we desire to take following him seriously, if we desire to hear His voice, to become true disciples of Jesus, then we have to prioritize listening to the voice of our Rabbi. Now. Word that's used for lonely in those passages that we read, Luke five, mark one, Mark six. In fact, all throughout the Gospels, in the New Testament, is this Greek word, aramos, which is this word picture, and it means desolate or solitary, wilderness, quiet, alone. And it's this word that's often used when talking about an individual's retreat into the quiet in order to seek personal connection with God. And so for Jesus, disappearing into the lonely places. It was not about isolation. It was not an unhealthy thing. For Jesus, it was about re connection with his father. See, in the busyness of our lives, often, the first spiritual discipline that goes away is silence and solitude, because it's the easiest one for us to say that we don't have time for. However, when we're in those moments of craziness, in those busy seasons, silence and solitude is often the thing we need more of, not less. We see it in the life of Jesus, when his ministry got busy, when people began seeking him out, needing things from him, needing miracles, needing healings, Jesus took more time to go be alone with his father and pray, and that's what Jesus wants for us, in his kindness, in His love, Jesus offers you and I a better vision of life, a beautiful alternative silence and solitude is in itself an invitation from Jesus to enter into His very presence. It's an invitation to join in on the intimacy of a relationship with the God who is with us in the craziness of life. It's an invitation to sit with the God who is always present with us, even if our awareness of his presence has been dulled by the distraction of the noise that is always on. 24/7 engaging in silence and solitude. It is not cowardly. It is not just for introverts. It is not a bad thing. It is a reset for a soul that is overwhelmed by busyness. And now, though this is true, it doesn't make it easy. So what does it look like, practically for you and for i to push back against noise and to weave something like silence and solitude into our daily

rhythms? Well, for starters, the main component to silence and solitude is silence and solitude. It's kind of a prereq. It's in the name. It's for use finding time to be in that aramos place, just you and just Jesus, which might be easier said than done for some of us. But truthfully, if we want to practice silence and solitude, counter cultural practice, a spiritual practice that Jesus himself found so life giving, we must find the space to prioritize it in our lives and so, as we've talked a lot about in the series, this is not just something else to burden your already busy morning routine life with, But this is a beautiful opportunity for you to examine what is something that you can actually replace with something as refreshing and life giving as silence and solitude. And so for me personally, it means waking up earlier than my kids, which is so painful, they get up so early, and it means not looking at any social media in the mornings, because it's too much noise. It's too loud, and it means prioritizing and protecting that first 10 to 15 minutes of my day in order to enter into the presence of God. Because I know that for me, if I don't get this time, I will not be as kind, as loving, as generous, as gracious, and as gracious and as patient of a father and a husband to my kids and to my wife, and so I'll usually spend a portion of this time just with my eyes closed in complete stillness. And I'm not necessarily praying anything. I am just waiting and listening and resting in the stillness and the presence of God. And sometimes I hear from God.

Hunter Emmert 14:01

A lot of times I don't hear from God, but either way, whether I hear from him or I don't hear from them, from him, I always leave that time feeling more affection and love for who God is. And in those few minutes of silence, while they are the most life giving for me and my day and my week, they also end up being the most challenging for me, because I feel as though I need to be productive, like I need to get further ahead on my Bible reading plan. I mean, we're coming up on fall. I'm like, four months behind. I need to read that book, finish those two books that I already started, pray for these people. Like I feel as though I need to be productive. But that's I think the beauty to this type of silence and solitude that Jesus modeled is that we are being unproductive, and yet God still desperately loves us. We are at our most unproductive, and God still desperately loves us. Silence. Solitude, with God at its very core, is a rejection of productivity and it is an acceptance of grace. One writer put it this way, solitude and silence are the most radical of the spiritual disciplines, because they most directly attack the sources of human misery and wrongdoing. To be in solitude is to choose to do nothing for extensive periods of time. All accomplishment is given up. Silence is required to complete solitude for until we enter quietness, the world still lays a hold of us. When we go into solitude and silence, we stop making demands on God. It is enough that God is God, we are His. We learn we have a soul. God is here, and this world is my Father's world. Is there anything more refreshing than that? That God is God. We belong to Him. We are His. This is his world. He is in control. We should rest in that presence, in that quiet place, friends, silence and solitude is so powerful, because in our unproductiveness, Jesus, in all of his love and all of His mercy, in all of his majesty and power, he sits with us, meets us, and reminds us just how much he cares for you and for I, you and I were not an afterthought in God's redemptive work and plan in the world, we were the first thing on his mind. We exist in a universe that is ruled by such a compassionate God that he wants to commune with us in that quiet place. The question is, will we allow God to meet us in that very silence that we so often avoid, the silence that we so often push to the back burner or fill in just with another thing. Because I think, I think that God just might use that oremos place, that quiet place, to meet with you, to meet with me and to form in us a new type of intimacy with Him. And I think that it might just be so counter cultural that it has the power to just totally transform our lives simply because we made space and time to meet with God in that Ramos place. And so God, that's my prayer this morning. God, would you help us be people who are not afraid of silence, but God, we know that often you are the still small whisper in the silence. God, help us to recognize that you are here, that this world is your world. We belong to you. God, what a refreshing truth that is that we do not have to be afraid of the silence. But God, we can join in on that, and as we do that, God, you form in us a new type of intimacy with yourself. God, we love you. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.