

Devotional for March 4, 2020

CALLED DEEPER: The Way of Jesus—*Solitude*

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. Mark 1:35

Following the Way of Jesus means living the way he did and becoming more and more like him. One of the rhythms of life Jesus practiced was regularly taking time to be alone with his heavenly Father. Immediately after he was baptized, Jesus went by himself into the wilderness for 40 days. He took time for solitude and prayer before he chose his disciples. During busy times of teaching, healing people, and telling them about God's surprising kingdom, Jesus often withdrew by himself or with just a few of his closest disciples. Before his suffering and death, he went off by himself in a garden to pray. If the Son of God needed regular times of solitude and prayer, how much more do we need them?

At Riverside Bible Camp, part of each day is set aside for campers to have "God Time." They find a favorite spot on camp to be alone with the Lord. They bring along a Bible and a notebook so they can read and reflect on God's Word, pray, and journal about what they sense God saying to them. Campers often say that God Time is one of the biggest highlights of camp for them. It helps them develop a regular habit of dwelling in God's Word and prayer.

When we follow Jesus' lead in rooting our lives in solitude and prayer, it taps us into limitless reservoirs of peace and strength. We grow deeper in our connection and dependence on the Lord. We become more aware and responsive to the needs of others.

Perhaps you already have a healthy pattern of quiet time, beginning and ending your day in prayer and God's Word, or consistently carving out other times throughout the day. Or perhaps you haven't yet developed a regular habit of listening to the Lord and sensing his presence and guidance. Wherever you are at, Jesus invites you deeper. He has more life, more joy waiting for you. Meet him regularly in his Word and prayer, and he will show you the Way.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

Read Mark 1:9-15, 32-39.

What do you notice about what the Father says to Jesus at his baptism?

What has Jesus done so far in his ministry?

If God was speaking to you, what do you imagine He would say?

How would it affect you if it was the same message that He spoke to Jesus?

What happens to Jesus in the wilderness? What does He do afterward?

Why do you think solitude and prayer become so central in Jesus' life?

How could "God Time" become more central in your life?

What have you found most helpful in rooting yourself in God's Word and prayer?

What barriers have you encountered in developing those habits?

Who or what could help you overcome them?

Where might Jesus be calling you to go deeper in following Him?

How do you think the Holy Spirit is challenging and encouraging us as a congregation?

Where do we have the greatest room to grow in following Jesus as a church?