

SUGGESTIONS FOR TIMES OF SOLITUDE + REST

For many, extended times of solitude and silence can be challenging because it is such a drastic shift from the frenetic pace of our lives and culture. We're so conditioned to think that *busyness* is next to godliness that we may feel like we're doing something wrong by taking time to just be still. It's as if someone has tapped the brakes of our fast-paced life and – for a moment – we feel the resistance of the seatbelt. However, many times it's in the stillness that God wants to meet with us...if only we'd make intentional time "to be still and know."

Clement of Alexandria (an early church father) said, "Prayer is companionship with God." Know that as long as you've waited for this time, the Lord has waited even longer.

*The LORD longs to be gracious to you;
therefore he will rise up to show you compassion.
For the LORD is a God of justice.
Blessed are all who wait for him!
(Isaiah 30.18)*

This time is primarily about *being* rather than *doing*; *waiting* rather than *working*. Here are some suggestions:

1. Use whatever helps you spend time with God in a meaningful way.

Bring instrumental or worship music, a Bible, a journal, a snack or lunch (if you're not fasting); a folding chair or blanket and appropriate clothing if you'd like to hike or spend time outdoors. Leave your phones, tasks, projects, or assignments. Be careful not to make reading or writing a task, either.

2. Allow yourself to let go of expectations

You might want to begin your time by praying or journaling your agendas, needs, or expectations. Then, take a breath and surrender them to God. Trust that our Father knows what you need before you even ask. Wait on the Spirit of God to breathe peace over you. Allow yourself to be surprised by what the Lord may bring to you. Also, release yourself from your own spiritual expectations of "doing it right" or "doing it wrong."

3. Know this: distractions will come!

Just because we've slowed down and set apart this time doesn't mean our minds won't try to speed us up again. Don't beat yourself up when that unfinished task, upcoming event, or unresolved issue pops into your head. Acknowledge it. Then, with God's grace, "send it down the river" for another time. Or, if you just can't shake it, perhaps the Spirit is inviting you to deal with it in his loving presence.

4. Spend some of your time in silence

In our loud and chaotic world, silence is a necessary detox. If prayer is companionship and communication, allow space for quiet rest and listening. More often than not, hearing God is both more mysterious and less difficult than we make it. Remember that it's OK to just be in his presence, like when you're with an old friend.

5. Don't worry: Naps are allowed!

Who says naps are just for children? If you're feeling drowsy during an extended time of solitude (4-6 hours), let yourself rest! There is no solitude police (see suggestion #2 about "doing it right" or "doing it wrong") Perhaps a little time to close your eyes is just the gift God wants to give you. Remember that whole "Sabbath" thing? That was his idea.



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