

## Introduction

- A few authors that introduced and shaped my understanding of Spiritual Disciplines
  - The Spirit of Disciplines by Dallas Willard
    - Lesson: To see Spiritual disciplines as a means of Christ being formed in me. That meant to do what Jesus did I must walk in his steps, to enter into a lifetime of discipleship.
  - The Celebration of Disciplines by Richard Foster
    - Lesson: Spiritual disciplines as a means of God's grace which brings freedom-liberation. Freedom through transformation that I cannot achieve through the strength of my own will-power. That as I place myself/position myself before God he begins to do the work of transformation through his Spirit.
  - Quiet by Susan Cain and Spiritual Director Jan Johnson
    - Lesson: Speak about our personalities. They bring extroverted and introverted thoughts into spiritual disciplines. How a church can often be a welcoming place for extroverts but diminish what would be seen as introverted practices. That we should embrace and celebrate the uniqueness of our personalities and that of others.
    - Some of these spiritual practices/disciplines will align with our personalities while others will be a challenge for us. We should embrace what comes easy but also what challenges us.
- **Transition:** Lastly I embrace the terms spiritual disciplines and spiritual practices. Why?
  - Discipline because it requires intentional pursuit to build these spiritual habits, especially when our emotions have fled and demands overwhelm us.
  - Practice because it is a learning and growing process.
  - It takes discipline and practice to show up. But as we show up and connect with God He does the perfecting through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
- **Spiritual Challenge:** The spiritual challenge for our lives is will we show up?
  - "When thou does knock at my heart's door, let me not keep thee standing without but welcome thee with joy and thanksgiving" -John Baillie
  - I believe God is knocking on our heart's door, saying "everything you are longing for is found in me", may we respond to his invitation.

- **PRAY**

**The Spiritual Discipline of Solitude**  
**“The Glory of Withdrawing”**

- “Solitude is the glory of being alone with God while loneliness is the pain of being alone”
  - In my life I have experienced God take my loneliness, the pain of being alone, the pain of isolation and transform it in Solitude and into Solitude.
  - This is important to distinguish because people often confuse solitude with loneliness
  - A person who has inner solitude whether by themselves or in a crowded room doesn't feel alone. While a person in loneliness whether by themselves or in a crowded room will feel alone.
  - Solitude is an outward practice that shapes our inward being
- Throughout Scripture God has used Solitude or redeemed loneliness in the lives of individuals
  - Abraham outside under the stars alone with God receives a promise
  - Jacob alone wrestles with God and his name is changed forever
  - Moses in the wilderness hears the voice of God and the call for his life
  - Hannah alone in her pain cried out to God for the birth of a child and received the answer to her cry
  - Samuel in the temple where the ark of God was heard the voice of God
  - David the lonely forgotten shepherd boy was shaped by God in the fields to be a king
  - Elijah fleeing death threats hid in the wilderness and experienced the provision of God and heard the voice of God.
  - Daniel alone in the lions' den experienced the protection of God
- Our moments of loneliness can be transformed into moments of solitude with God that become monumental moments in our lives where a sense of God's presence, provision, and protection are undeniable and our relationship with Him is deepened.
- **Transition:** What about Jesus? What does Jesus teach about solitude?
  - Jesus though he didn't speak directly on solitude practiced solitude. I want to look at 6 moments in Jesus' life where he withdrew into solitude.

**Body:**

**1. Spirit Led Solitude**

### a. Solitude that Transforms

- i. Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11 “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry” V:1-2
  1. Led by the Spirit
  2. Into the Wilderness
  3. To be Tempted (to be tried and tested through means of trial)
    - a. Power (Stone to bread-commanding of angels use his power to serve his personal needs. At the garden of gethsemane Jesus knows he has angels at his disposal but doesn't call on them. He doesn't succumb to the worship of power and glory)
  4. Fasting
- ii. There is a solitude that is initiated by God in our lives. Will we respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit in our lives?
- iii. What stops us?
  1. The wilderness is not a desirable place. It is a desolate place.
  2. The Testing: We fear what will be revealed, what we will learn about ourselves. We are confronted by our thoughts, our hearts. We can manipulate and deceive ourselves and others but before God our manipulation and deception is exposed. So we choose to stay away.
- iv. God's Working in Solitude
  1. “Though temptation is authored by Satan for our destruction, it's allowed by God for our training. The big decisions we must make in public, in the spotlight, are influenced by the daily, character-shaping choices made in private.”

## 2. Everyday Life Solitude

### a. Solitude in Rest and Habit

- i. Scripture: Luke 5:12-16 “But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray” v:16 (other version say that he would **often** withdraw)
  1. Called first disciples, healed a man full of leprosy, which created great crowds that came to hear him and to be healed.
  2. Withdraw
  3. Desolate Places
  4. Pray-Spiritual Discipline

- ii. Jesus knew when to withdraw to be alone with God. Are you aware of when those moments are for you? When it is time to withdraw to be alone with God? Or do you quickly surrender to the demands of those around you?

**b. Solitude in Decisions**

- i. Scripture: Luke 6:12-16 “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God” v:12
  - 1. Went out to the mountain
  - 2. To pray
  - 3. All night he continued in prayer
  - 4. Narrows down his disciples and chooses those that would walk in greater intimacy with him
- ii. There are some decisions in our lives that require a deeper conversation with God, that answer may not come quickly and you might have to continue ALL NIGHT talking to God until you arrive at a prayer-saturated decision where it is only you and God.
- iii. Is there a decision that requires solitude with God, a decision that you need to saturate with prayer and contend with God all night?

**c. Solitude in Grieving**

- i. Scripture: Matthew 14 “Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. **BUT** when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot” V:13
  - 1. Jesus hears news of John’s death-family. He has a crowd that is following him. So in the midst of grief and demands what does Jesus do?
  - 2. He withdrew
  - 3. Boat
  - 4. Desolate place by himself
  - 5. BUT crowds followed him
- ii. Is there a grief that you have ignored in your life? Grief that is unattended in our lives can lead to anger, irritability, fear, overreaction, to apathy, numbness and depression. When we go to God with our grief we get to experience the comfort of God that goes beyond human understanding.

**d. Solitude in Long Days**

- i. Scripture: Matthew 14:22-23 “Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he

went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.”

1. Long day of teaching and healing he withdraws again to be alone
  2. Unfinished grieving? Mentally, Emotionally, Physically, Spiritually drained?
- ii. It is for us to navigate when we need a break from the crowds after long days. Not because we need to be away from people but because we need to be alone with God.

#### **e. Solitude in Difficult Moments**

- i. Scripture: Luke 22:39-46 “And he came out and went, **as was his custom**, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him...And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed” v: 39-41
  1. Solitude was part of Jesus’ custom-it was an ordinary discipline/practice in his life. In distress for the task that was before him Jesus withdrew one last time, knelt down and prayed.
  2. There was no response from God, at least not recorded in Scripture. Jesus knew what he was to do. But he poured his soul out in prayer before God. “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will”
- ii. There are moments in our lives that can often weigh heavy on our souls where we know what we ought to do. Where do we find strength? In solitude with God.

### **3. The Practice of Solitude**

- a. Withdrawing to be alone without the incorporation of other spiritual practices does not produce solitude, it produces isolation.
- b. He withdrew the intentional decision
- c. Desolate Place-Mountain he had his place to go
- d. He stopped-life’s demands, the constant demand of people did not squeeze out his moments of solitude, if anything it increased his need of those moments.
- e. In solitude we assume God wants to speak to us and relate to us in a personal way. We abstain from being with people and from noise to be with God and hear Him

**Warning:** Solitude without Community

- “Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. . . . Let him who is not in community beware of being alone. . . . Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair.” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer
  - Ex: David in Solitude was shaped by God-David in loneliness without community destroyed his life and the life of others. By having an affair and giving the orders to have a man killed

## **Conclusion**

- **Jesus on the Cross**
  - Scripture: Mark 15:33-34 “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
    - “Solitude is the glory of being alone with God while loneliness is the pain of being alone”
    - Jesus experiences the deep pain of being alone so we may have the glory of being with God.
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- **Personal Solitude Experience**
  - The anchor in dry seasons-Dark Nights of the Soul
  - God is with me
  - The courage and freedom to Stand alone
  - Rest-Refreshment-Contemplation