

The welcome verse for this week is Psalm 23:2: “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.”



Practicing Solitude and Prayer

Luke 5:12-16; Mark 6:31; Matthew 14:23

The Bottom Line: All of life is built out from the *eremos*, solitude with God.

Introduction:

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Why?

The wilderness is the place of strength, not weakness.

Today, we discuss the importance of solitude and prayer in the life of the believer.

All of life is built out from the *eremos*, solitude with God.

Tension:

We have become comfortable in one big kingdom of noise.

“The reason we live in a culture increasingly without faith is not because science has somehow disproved the unprovable, but because the white noise of secularism has removed the very stillness in which it might endure or be reborn. The greatest threat to faith today is not hedonism, but distraction.” – Andrew Sullivan

Many of us would rather be caught up in the noise of life than be alone with God and ourselves. This is just what the enemy intends.

Truth:

“Let him who cannot be alone beware of community; let him who is not in community beware of being alone.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Your life among other believers is only helpful when you have built a foundation of solitude with God. Your encouragement, ministry, and witness to other believers should be an overflow of your own time away with God.

Solitude is *not* loneliness or isolation.

***“Solitude is a chosen separation for refining the soul.
Isolation is what you crave when you neglect the first.”
- Wayne Cordeiro***

We see throughout the gospels that Jesus had a regular rhythm of solitude and community, withdrawing to the quiet place and living among the crowds. The busier he became, the more he would withdraw.

Solitude is the place where we find calm, peace, and communion with our Father. There isn't a need for a lot of words; silence is welcomed and desired.

Your life in solitude is helpful for prayer, rest, ministry preparation, guidance, and listening.

In solitude, we come home to God and ourselves to find freedom and stability. Solitude creates in us a “soul anchor” for the rest of our ordinary life.

Application & Conclusion:

Solitude has been known over church history as, essentially, the most important spiritual discipline. We will either recapture this practice or we will face spiritual oblivion. Start where you're at and give yourself grace in cultivating this life. It's practice, not performance. It will be hard, but it will be worth it.

Your Practice This Week – Take two hours for solitude this week where you are alone with God in prayer and listening. Silence the noise around you and within you and learn to be present with God and yourself.

Next Steps:

- Commit to the weekly practice given by Pastor Matt.
- Read *The Great Omission* by Dallas Willard.
- Pray for the direction and invitations of the Holy Spirit to become evident.

Discussion questions for group this week:

- 1. What does this teach me about God?**
- 2. What does this teach me about me?**
- 3. How do I apply this to my life?**
- 4. If I could ask a question about this it would be....**