



HIGHEST PRAISE APOSTOLIC CHURCH FALL CURRICULUM

SERIES: PRACTICING THE LIFE OF JESUS

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

LESSON: SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

CONCEPTS OF THIS LESSON ARE DERIVED FROM DONALD WHITNEY'S BOOK, *SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE*

SERIES FOCUS: This series focuses on studying the life of Jesus Christ and finding practical applications for the life of every believer. How can I, as a follower of Christ, imitate Christ? How can we put into practice the life of Jesus, into our everyday lives?

LESSON FOCUS: This lesson focuses on the spiritual disciplines and benefits of practicing moments of silence and solitude, in order to draw closer to Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome, everyone, to our second Bible study lesson on spiritual discipline. Today, we're exploring the practice of Silence and Solitude, a discipline that allows us to draw closer to God in the midst of our busy lives. Let's begin with a brief prayer:

"Dear Heavenly Father, as we gather here to learn about the discipline of Silence and Solitude, we ask for your presence and guidance. Help us find the stillness we need to hear your voice. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen."

UNDERSTANDING SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

What is “silence and solitude”?

You might be asking what is so important about dedicating a lesson to this subject?

When we use terms like silence and solitude our minds might begin to imagine monks cloistering themselves away from society. Or we might think of ancient Yoga practices. We should begin this lesson by stating very clearly: this **is not** what we are referring to when we discuss this. We will go into that in more detail later on.

Rather, what we want to do is develop a richer spiritual life. In order to do that we have to better understand why Jesus went away to pray. The better we understand why Jesus did this so often, the better we can apply this principle to the spiritual disciplines that we practice in our daily lives.

The fast-paced, noisy world.

If you've spent any time in the modern world, you'll quickly realize that we are busy. We are constantly preoccupied. American consumerism has trained us to want more. More entertainment, more noise, more amazon purchases, bigger houses, newer cars, new technology, etc.

The uncomfortable reality is that we are more influenced by our culture of hurry than we'd like to admit. The reality is that this “hurry culture” has assaulted our spiritual life with Christ. We need to slow down. The theologian Henri Nouwen said, “Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life.”

If we are going to grow in our spiritual life with Christ, we need make time to be away with Jesus on a daily basis.

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The importance of solitude in the life of Jesus.

Let's look at some of the examples where Jesus went away to pray..

- ⇒ **Mark 1:35** – “And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”
- ⇒ **Matthew 14:23** – “And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone.”
- ⇒ **Luke 5:16** – “But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.”

- ⇒ **Matthew 26:36** – “Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here, while I go over there and pray.’”
- ⇒ **Luke 22:41-42** - "And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.'"

Solitude was a major part of the prayer life of Jesus and so should ours be. Free from distraction, free from hurry.

Now, let's look at some scriptures that speak about silence when encountering God.

- ⇒ **Psalms 62:5** - "For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him."
- ⇒ **Lamentations 3:25-26** - "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord."
- ⇒ **Isaiah 30:15** - "For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, 'In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength.'"
- ⇒ **Zephaniah 1:7** - "Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests."
- ⇒ **Ecclesiastes 5:2** - "Be not rash with your mouth, nor let your heart be hasty to utter a word before God, for God is in heaven and you are on earth. Therefore let your words be few."

THE BENEFITS OF SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

- A. Deeper relationship:** The spiritual discipline of silence and solitude in our prayer time cultivates a deeper intimacy in our God. It creates a space for uninterrupted, communion with Him.
- B. Hearing God's Voice:** In the quietness of solitude, we can better hear His voice. We can better learn what His voice sounds like. We are better prepared to be led by His still, small voice. So long as what He is saying aligns with the word of God.
- C. Counter-cultural resistance:** The practice of silence and solitude with our God is one of the greatest ways to fight against the consumerism of our modern world. It reminds us that our true place is in communion with the Holy Spirit. It

reminds us that we are not a part of this world, but that we belong to Him. Our peace is found in His presence and not in the things of this world.

- D. Foundational for Other Spiritual Disciplines:** When you practice these disciplines you will soon notice that they are foundational to other spiritual disciplines like prayer and studying the word. When we find a quiet place to escape to, we are better prepared to receive what God has for us.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

It is important to start this section with a reminder:

The concept of silence and solitude has been largely influenced by pagan practices like Yoga and Buddhism. This is not at all what we mean by it. The difference with biblical silence and solitude is that we are not waiting for an internal source of truth to enlighten us. **The truth is NOT inside ourselves.** We are not calming our breathing until we are enlightened with some subjective truth. No, the biblical concept of silence and solitude has everything to do with hearing from God Himself. Keep that in mind as we move along.

- A. Finding the Right Space:** Explore creating a peaceful environment for solitude. What are some great spaces for you to get alone with God? A room in your house? A park bench? A run or light jog?
- B. Setting Aside Time:** Discuss strategies for making time for silence in our daily routines. When is the best time of day to practice this? Praying during the kids nap time? Early morning prayer? Find the best time and begin practicing it.
- C. Techniques to use:** Find ways for calming the mind and heart during silence. What are some practical tips you can use to be distraction free?
- D. Listening to God:** Discuss ways to actively listen for God's voice during solitude. This is a great opportunity to journal what you feel God is speaking. We encourage you to do a bible study to confirm that God is speaking to you clearly.
- E. Overcoming Challenges:** The reality is that this spiritual discipline goes against our nature. We are so accustomed to fast-paced distractions that this will feel uncomfortable at first. Push through it and you will begin to grow in your love of spending time with Jesus.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Silence and Solitude are powerful tools for deepening our relationship with God. Let's commit to regularly seeking moments of stillness and solitude in our lives, knowing that in these moments, we can draw nearer to our Heavenly Father.

Closing Prayer:

“Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of Silence and Solitude, where we can encounter you in a special way. Help us to make space for this discipline in our lives and grant us the peace that surpasses all understanding. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. *What are some realistic and personal goals that you can incorporate into your daily life to set time for moments of silence and solitude?*
2. *What are some things that you could cut out of your daily routine, or weekly routine, that would free up time for you to practice silence and solitude?*
3. *What is the biggest obstacle, or distraction, in your life that prevents you from practicing silence and solitude?*

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK

- ⇒ Go over some of the passages of scripture that we went over today. Meditate on how they apply to your walk with God.
- ⇒ Set aside time for a period of Silence and Solitude this week and journal about your experience to share with the group next time.