

Godlike: Solitude

Day 1

Basics

When I was in Jr. High, I felt slightly out of place with my peers. Like many kids, I could see that some kids were popular while others were not, and I was part of the "not". I looked at what it took to be popular, and I watched other kids for clues. As I watched, it seemed more and more like popularity was out of reach, so I reconciled myself to the fact that I would be one of the regular kids at school. High School followed, and I stopped caring so much about popularity, then in college I realized nobody really cared about it anymore. The thing that was so important to me for a moment when I was younger was only there for a moment, yet I had watched so many become slaves to it, and I was ready to volunteer for the same type of slavery, if only I had the resources. Popularity is often, though not always, the result of accepting a certain type of prison. In order to be popular, many people find it necessary to conform in every way to the expectations of their peers, trapping themselves in a life they don't really want for a reward that fades all too quickly. If we are honest, much of the life we live, even as adults, bears some resemblance to our teenage desire for popularity. While there are great rewards to living among others, there is also a certain weight to the expectations that are placed on us. It seems strange to think that all of the social media, regular media including radio, T.V., and newspapers, telemarketers and junk mail, spam texts, calls and emails are a relatively new thing. For most of human history, from David tending his sheep to your grand fathers or great-grand fathers, people spent considerable time absolutely alone. What are we missing by not having this alone time? Check out this devotional to find out:

<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/spiritual-disciplines-gospel-solitude-donald-whitney>

Verses: Matthew 4:1-11, Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 4:42

Prayer Topics: Quiet, Meditation, Reflection

Day 2

Practical Steps

What do we do to practice solitude? Here are a few ideas to get you started:

<https://www.fishhook.us/articles/a-guide-for-silence-and-solitude>

Verses: Psalm 119:15, Isaiah 26:3, Matthew 6:6

Prayer Topics: Focus, Preparation, Patience

Day 3

Silence

We often find it difficult to be quiet. For the person being noisy, it isn't so bad. I remember times when the boys were little that I dreamed of having some peace and quiet, just a little time without noise. While I was longing for it, they were very happy with the noisy status quo. The problem is that their noise led nowhere. From my perspective as an adult, it bore no fruit. It did not communicate anything worthwhile, and it served only to keep the noise maker from being bored. It served to soothe anxiety, but if left alone it would lead to an inability to be alone and quiet with oneself. To remedy this, we set up a time for the boys to be quiet before bedtime, so that they would learn to be peaceful with themselves. We had done something similar when they were infants, as we learned that infants and toddlers actually had to learn to put themselves to sleep. Tyler would fight sleep with all his might, so we would rock him and pat him on the back for what seemed an eternity to get him to go to sleep. If he woke up in the middle of the night, he would need to be rocked and patted once again. Someone who was older and wiser than us told us

that he needed to learn how to put himself to sleep, and that if we let him go through a night or two of unpleasantness to learn, he would be better off and so would we. We put him to bed the first night and he cried for about 45 minutes, the next night just a couple of minutes, and the third night there was no crying, just calm drifting into sleep. As adults, we are often similar to children. Being alone and quiet is hard for us because we have gotten out of the habit of being without noise and other people. We need white noise machines to sleep, we need the radio on while we are working, and we need to constantly be managing people's perceptions of us through our speech. In most books on the spiritual disciplines, solitude and silence go hand in hand, because they are about building trust in God through getting rid of the crutches that we use to get through difficult aspects of life. We are prone to be anxious if we are alone, and we are likewise prone to be anxious if we are not trying to explain ourselves to others. Part of practicing silence is the discipline of speaking to others only for certain purposes. We can set a day to speak only when necessary. If that is not practical, we can take a fast from speaking any words designed to manage people's image of us. This forces us to trust in God and allows us to stop trying to manipulate the thoughts others have toward us. In order to achieve silence toward others, setting regular times of silence alone is often helpful. In order to learn how to do this, the following article is very helpful:

<https://carlagasser.com/4-ways-to-practice-the-spiritual-discipline-of-silence-solitude/>

Verses: Boredom, Listening, Calm

Prayer Topics: Proverbs 17:28, Psalm 46:10, Psalm 62:5, Lamentations 3:26

Day 4

Foundations

Silence and Solitude are vital foundations of the other spiritual disciplines we

have talked about so far. So why have we waited until now to talk about them? Because we do not practice our spiritual disciplines in the way of the world. Many of the new age or eastern traditions place an emphasis on clearing your mind. The goal of eastern meditation is to not think any thoughts at all. This is not the case in the Christian tradition. Our goal is to have only one thing on our mind, and that is God. While we are seeking silence and solitude, we do not do so as an end in itself but so that we can hear the voice of God better. When we are surrounded by noise, when we are making our own noise, we will have a hard time hearing God. Our practice of meditation and prayer are reliant on our ability to seek and find silence and solitude. But the silence and solitude exist only to make a suitable environment for prayer and meditation. Check out the article below to see how to pursue silence and solitude as a means of enhancing the other spiritual disciplines:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/take-a-break-from-the-chaos>

Verses: 1 Peter 3:4, James 1:19, Isaiah 30:15

Prayer Topics: Routine, Attention, Peace

Day 5

Thanks to Sylvester Warsaw, Jr for our devotional today

Solitude isn't self imposed isolation isolating yourself due to fear from being afraid to live life that God has purposed for His children to live, 1 John 4:7-21; 1 Tim. 1:6-10. Isolation doesn't mean physically removing yourself from participating in community. Oftentimes isolation is dressed up under the guise of shyness or a lack of not having the proper skills for the assignment or the social skills. Solitude isn't hiding or fleeing because of disobedience. Just as Adam and Eve, Jonah and Elijah hid we too try hiding from God when we erroneously understand solitude as isolation.

Solitude isn't running from God but to God. Solitude is that deep hunger and thirst for unbroken communion with God because of knowing He's the only One that satisfies that inner hunger and thirst for more of Him. It's in solitude God addresses the issues of our heart and reveals His plans He has for us that strengthen us to participate in building the kingdom of heaven in the heart of men as His ambassadors here on earth. Solitude isn't escaping from life but running to Him who is the life giver. Solitude is that quiet place of intimacy with God where we often experience the fullness of God's love which drives out fear because of courage to love and not just live. Solitude is that place where we meet God so He can talk to us without all the noise. Solitude is intentional. Solitude isn't choosing to be a hermit but an instrument of the good works God created His children to be. Solitude equips us for the assignment God has purposed us for as we journey hand in hand with Christ Jesus daily. The language of quietness that comes from solitude is powerful because we're taught the power of waiting depending on God because our expectation is only from Him, Psalm 62:5. Just as Jesus got alone to a solitary place we too must quiet ourselves so He can empower us by the Holy Spirit to complete the assignment He has assigned His children.