



SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Session Six | Solitude
Dr. Barry Stricker

READ

Luke 6:12-19; Gal. 1:17

WHAT IS SOLITUDE?

Solitude can be defined as “choosing to be alone so that we can be with God.” Often, the idea of being alone can be intimidating or even frightening. Even more, we may feel that, given the noise and busyness of our world, solitude would be impossible. Even so, God’s people for centuries have cherished the discipline that opens the door for rest, quiet, relief, and time with God.

WHY SOLITUDE?

The ideal here is a back-and-forth rhythm – where we spend time with God that then prepares us to spend time in service and ministry. Ideally, we withdraw for times with God . . . and then immerse ourselves deeply in community. Dietrich Bonhoeffer essentially described this spiritually healthy rhythm in his book *Life Together*. Chapter Two of that book is entitled, “The Day with Others.” Chapter Three is entitled, “The Day Alone.” And those two experiences cannot easily be separated from one another. Both community and solitude are essential – though, these days, we are probably more likely to short-change the solitude.

An interesting biblical picture of solitude shows up (somewhat obscurely) in the story of Paul’s conversion. If we piece together the story from both the Book of Acts and Galatians, we discover that, just after his conversion, Paul spent significant time in Arabia, a desert place (Galatians 1:17). We cannot be certain of all of the details related to this time in the wilderness (and scholars have offered much in the way of speculation!), but clearly this was an “alone time” for Paul.

More than simply an opportunity to “get away,” this time for Paul was a time to be with God and a time to hear from God. That sort of thing cannot happen unless we make room for solitude in our lives.

THE MODEL OF JESUS

If we need yet another biblical example, we need only to look at Jesus’ model in Luke 6:12-19. Within that passage, we encounter solitude (a night in prayer), community (Jesus gathering with his disciples), and ministry (Jesus going out to preach and heal). And even the order of those activities is probably significant: our time alone with God prepares us for time with others . . . which, in turn, prepares us for service and ministry.

In solitude, we are reminded of God’s love for us. We find (and perhaps re-find) our identity in Christ. And we experience renewal and strengthening for ministry and service.

During this unit of study, take time to be alone with God. It is a simple discipline – that is often very hard to do! Especially in a world as busy and frenzied as this one.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you find it comfortable – or unsettling – to be alone? Is time alone something that you would look forward to or is it something that you would typically avoid? Why? If you had time to be alone, how would you use that time?
2. Which are you most drawn to: a day with others or a day alone? Why?
3. In Luke 6:12-19, we see a pattern in Jesus's life: solitude followed by community leading ultimately to ministry. Do you see that pattern in your life right now? How would following that pattern affect your life?
4. What would happen to you if you completely avoided solitude? What would be some of the negative results and outcomes?

NEXT STEPS

1. Pray for an openness to solitude – and pray for a willingness to focus intentionally on God without distraction.
2. Take time this week to be alone with God.
3. As you spend time in solitude, notice what happens next. After a time of solitude, do you feel more at peace? After a time of solitude, are you more grounded in your identity as a beloved child of God?
4. Find a way this week to practice the pattern that we see in Luke 6:12-19: solitude followed by community leading ultimately to ministry. As you consciously choose to follow that pattern, stop to notice how the different parts of the pattern are connected to each other.