

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Unlike the disciplines of fasting, Scripture, worship, and lament, the spiritual discipline of solitude is one where we do nothing. We spirit ourselves to a place where no one can disturb us, where it is just us and the Lord—and we sit and do nothing. Absolutely nothing.

It is deeply ironic how, despite doing nothing, solitude can still be one of the most difficult spiritual disciplines to practice. We all have thoughts and feelings, desires and impulses that we want to run away from. We might suppress memories that come to mind, or distract ourselves from focusing on things we're not ready to work through.

It is for that reason that we look towards Psalm 23, which provides us with a model of what the practice of solitude can look like. While we might look like we're doing nothing, the very heart of solitude is to still and quiet ourselves to listen from and connect with the One True God, the Creator of the Universe. Our souls long to be in His presence.

David reminds us that the practice of solitude is all about soul rest. If we knew who our Shepherd is, we would know that because of Him, we lack nothing. (v.1) In Him, we find true peace and restoration as He makes us lie down in green pastures and drink by quiet waters. (v.2) He welcomes us continually to be beside Him. (v.5b) Because of Him, there is nothing we need to fear. (v.4)

It is during these times of solitude that we are able to hear for the Shepherd's voice, and focus on what He is saying to us. Away from the noise and clutter of everyday life, we remember that we are His sheep, and we bask in and meditate on His goodness and mercy as it continues to chase after us. (v.6) Will you make time to spend with the Good Shepherd today, and allow Him to restore your soul?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

What does your quiet time with God look like? Do you have a habit of regularly coming to God in silence and solitude, where you sit in stillness before Him? If not, what is stopping you from doing so? Do you have any questions or uncertainties about what solitude can look like?

QUESTION TWO:

Apart from Jesus' regular withdrawals in the Gospels, the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19:1-18 provides us with a model of what solitude can look like. It also shows us the importance of practicing the discipline of solitude.

As you go through the passage with your group, think about the context in which Elijah found himself. What happened prior to this event? What caused him to fall into such despair? How did the Lord reveal Himself to Elijah, and why did He choose to do so in such a way?

QUESTION THREE:

Take the time now to think about how you can incorporate the practice of solitude into your daily life. Identify a time and place (e.g. during the morning, your lunch break at work, before you go to bed etc.; and find a place that is as quiet and as free from distractions as possible).

As you consider how you might practice it by yourself, try it first with your life group! The following steps may be useful if you have never practiced solitude before:

- Take around 5-10 minutes, and begin with a body prayer
- If your mind starts to distract itself with constant chatter, reign it in without feelings of judgment, guilt, or shame, and bring these thoughts to God
- Focus on practicing the presence of God—relax and enjoy being in God's presence! For some people, it may be helpful to imagine yourself sitting next to Jesus, or being beside Him
- Open yourself up to hear for what God is saying to you. If you don't feel a nudge or a conviction towards anything specific, you can continue to remain in and enjoy being in the presence of God
- Close your time with a prayer of gratitude for God Himself, and for anything He has revealed to you