



Silence and Solitude

Silence in the spiritual realm, it is not the literal absence of all noise, but the absence of all human-created stimuli. "Human-created" because most would consider a walk in the woods, in which the sounds of nature are present, to still be a time of "silence".

Solitude is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place. There is a solitude of the heart that can be maintained at all times. Crowds, or the lack of them, have little to do with this inward attentiveness.

The spiritual disciplines of silence and solitude may be quiet, but they're also full of adventure, because God Himself is waiting to meet you there. Whenever you get away from the noise and busyness of life to encounter God through silence and solitude, He'll change your soul in ways that go beyond words.

Here is how:

1. Prepare- Bring to your solitude whatever will help you to be with Jesus in a personal, interactive way. Probably you'll want your Bible, journal, and pen. If you'll be outside you may need walking shoes, a chair, sun protection, jacket or blanket, and water. You may need a lunch or snacks or you might choose to fast. Also you could bring art supplies, a favorite devotional book, a musical instrument, or a worship CD.
2. Unplug -Plan to set aside a time and space for Jesus in which you won't be interrupted by other people, cell phones, e-mails, media, loud noises, etc. (You may need to make arrangements with family members or others.) You might go to a secluded nature spot or a quiet room.
3. Do nothing! Begin your solitude by doing nothing, perhaps for thirty minutes. Just be with Jesus in the silence with no agenda. This will probably be difficult! It might help to take a prayer walk. You are training your body and soul to listen to the word of the Lord: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). With practice you can live your daily life in Jesus' easy yoke (Matt 11:25-30), free of hurry, worry, and selfish ambition.
4. Let go. You may be hoping to have a special time with God, hear a message from him, or to accomplish something important — release your desires to the Lord. You may be anxious about your work, a loved one, or a personal matter — put each concern into the Father's hands. Ask Jesus to lead you in this this time and then be open to whatever he has for you, trusting that it is good even if it doesn't feel good. You may feel refreshed by God or distress may surface. You may be encouraged or challenged.

5. Rest - What would you enjoy doing with Jesus? He is your Best Friend and he likes being with you! Probably you don't want to do a major Bible study or lots of reading. Set aside any concerns for loved ones or your ministry until the last part of your solitude. Instead of trying to accomplish projects, simply pray from your heart, perhaps meditating on a Psalm or Gospel story. If you're tired you may need to take a nap. Go ahead — Jesus took naps! This will help you to be refreshed and attentive to God.
6. Re-focus - In prayer everyone struggles with distracting thoughts — don't feel bad about it. When your mind wanders offer the distraction to God or replace it with a prayer. Give thanks and praise to God or meditate on Scripture. It may help you to gently repeat phrase from the Bible, possibly breathing the words in and out as a Breath Prayer.
7. Open up - What's been going on in your life lately? How are you feeling? Talk to God about your experiences and needs. You may want to journal your prayers and what God seems to be saying to you.
8. Practice – Silence and solitude is hard at first, but will become richer and more meaningful as you continue to practice. Try getting away monthly to be alone with God in silence and solitude. Put in on your calendar and honor it as a date with God.

Here's how you can use silence and solitude to grow closer to God:

- Pay attention to what's stirring in your soul. Notice the feelings of desperation and desire that you experience at various times. Instead of trying to suppress or run from those feelings, let them motivate you pursue time with God in silence and solitude.
- Incorporate silence and solitude into your life regularly. Choose a regular time and place to get away from life as usual and spend at least 10 minutes in silence and solitude as often as you can. Ask God to help you express your need for Him through a simple prayer, and choose a physical position that will enable you to stay alert yet worshipful.
- Overcome resistance. Don't let anything distract you from devoting yourself regularly to times of seeking God in silence and solitude. Entrust each of your current concerns specifically to God in prayer so you can be free to be fully present with Him during solitude and silence. If you're anxious or afraid when you think about spending time in solitude and silence, admit it to God and ask Him to comfort you.

- Seek rest for your body, mind, and soul. Pray for the wisdom you need to recognize when you've become dangerously tired – exhausted by life's demands, to the point where you can't hear God's voice speaking to you. Accept God's invitation to rest in His presence during solitude and silence. Rather than showing up tired for your special meetings with God, give your body the rest it needs by getting enough sleep and exercise, eating well, and drinking water regularly. While you're spending time in solitude and silence, take deep breaths and let the peace of God's presence fill your body. Let go of concerns that your mind is trying to hold onto during solitude and silence by opening yourself up to the revelation that comes from beyond your mind – from God Himself, who can speak to you about things that your mind can't figure out, but your spirit can hear. Ask God to help you quiet your mind and listen to Him with your spirit, trusting that He will respond to your prayer by speaking to you. If grief is weighing on your soul, confess it to God. When your soul feels grateful for God's love, express that gratitude to God.
- Let emptiness lead you to God's fulfillment. Don't try to deny or avoid the emptiness you feel inside sometimes. Instead, recognize that emptiness can be good when it motivates you to turn to God to seek fulfillment during your times of solitude and silence. So feel the pain of your emptiness as it carves out space in your soul for you to receive more of God's presence.
- Face yourself as you really are, and let God help you. Rather than hiding from God, denying who you are, or trying to control what others think of you, allow the truth of who you are to surface during solitude and silence – and face the reality of the person you see, flaws and all. Then remember that God loves you deeply and unconditionally, and ask Him to meet you right where you are and help you grow more into the person. He wants you to become. Use whatever painful new knowledge you've gained about yourself to repent from sin and grow closer to God, with the confidence that He will help you every step of the way. Keep in mind that God is for you, with you, and in you when you open yourself up to His powerful presence. So give yourself completely to God, who loves you just as you are but also loves you too much to let you stay as you are.
- Receive God's guidance. The more time you spend with God in solitude and silence, the more you'll learn how to recognize God's voice when He speaks to you. Pray for the guidance you need to make wise decisions, and be alert for the Holy Spirit witnessing to your spirit about what is true. Remember that the Holy Spirit will reveal truth to you only as you're able to bear it, so trust God's timing.



- Let the love that you experience in solitude and silence pour out into other people's lives. Each time that you return to life in community with other people after spending time in solitude and silence, draw upon the love that God has given you to love others in the ways He wants you to express love – from speaking kind and encouraging words, to serving them when they need help with something. Take what God has given you during your meetings with Him in solitude and silence and use it to bless others when you're with them.

Works Cited

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