

# The Discipline of Solitude.

**Proverbs 25:28.**

*Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.*



## Flourishing through Solitude with God.

Have you watched any news lately? It's numbing isn't it?  
Is it possible to flourish in a world that is truly floundering?  
Is it possible to abound with joy in a world that is abounding  
with chaos and confusion?

The Psalmist in Psalm 92 believes so.

### **Psalms 92:12-14.**

*The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;”*

The thriving, flourishing, abundant Christian life is not a product of external conditions, but internal conditions. It's not about what's going on around you, but rather what's going on within you.

The flourishing life is not a product of good circumstances, but rather of solitude with a good God. {Cary Schmidt}

## **Solitude.**

- **My experience in the UK:** Solitude is not a bad thing, in fact it is a very necessary thing for a Christian.

**The Discipline of Solitude** is the practice of our "waiting for God"

This is an aspect of private prayer and worship, but instead of doing the talking we do the listening.

This means we still ourselves to hear what God has to say.

This is about our willingness to be examined by God, to hear His voice because we have moved anything that is in the way of Him.

We might tell ourselves we prefer God's company to that of any other person or thing in the world.

Solitude puts that claim to the test.

**Who is the centre of your life?**

## **How to Practice the Discipline of Solitude.**

I have discovered that all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact,” wrote philosopher Blaise Pascal, “in that they cannot stay quietly in their own chamber.” Pascal wrote those words in the 1600’s, but they are even more applicable today.

We fill our lives with distractions, social media, television, games, and assume we are trying to avoid boredom, but often our diversions are rooted in a fear of solitude.

Almost every significant figure in the Bible, from Jacob to Elijah, Moses to Paul, spent time practicing the discipline of solitude. The Gospels frequently mention how Jesus “went off to a solitary place, where he prayed”

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## Self Control/Discipline .

### 2 Peter 1:3-9.

*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

*Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

- **You are what you choose to be.**
- **You are as spiritual as you choose to be.**
- **You are as victorious over your sinful nature as you choose to be.**
- **You are not a victim of circumstance or of Adam's sin, the choices are yours.**

## Self Control.

### 2 Peter 1:3-9.

*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.*

*For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.*

## **The Discipline of Solitude.**

- ❖ **There is a difference between being alone and solitude.**  
*"Loneliness is inner emptiness, and Solitude is inner fulfillment."* In order to have a healthy relationship with God, we need to learn how to properly be alone.
- Silence and solitude go hand in hand. Determining when to speak and when it is best to be silent is an important aspect to solitude. Many people feel helpless when they are being silent, but when a person holds their words it gives God the opportunity to speak.
- Solitude is a kind of companion to fellowship, a fasting from other people, to make our return to them all the better. And silence is a fasting from noise and talk, to improve our listening and speaking. But God doesn't mean for us to fast long from food, fellowship, noise, and talk.

## **The Discipline of Solitude.**

Solitude is the discipline that calls us to consciously pull away from everything else in our lives, including the company of other people, for the purpose of giving our full and undivided attention to God.

Increased engagement with God's word and prayer is at the heart of silence and solitude.

### **Luke 6:12;**

*One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.*

By avoiding solitude, we are missing out on opportunities for deeper communion with God.

## **Establishing priorities.**

**People use the phrase**

*“I’ll do it when The Spirit leads me to”*

This is just an excuse to lead an undisciplined life governed by emotions and whims.

**God a God of order.**

**1 Corinthians 14:40.**

*Let all things be done decently and in order.*

**2 Timothy 1:7.**

*For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.*

**John 9:4.**

*As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work.*

# Being disciplined with your time.

- Take inventory of your activities.

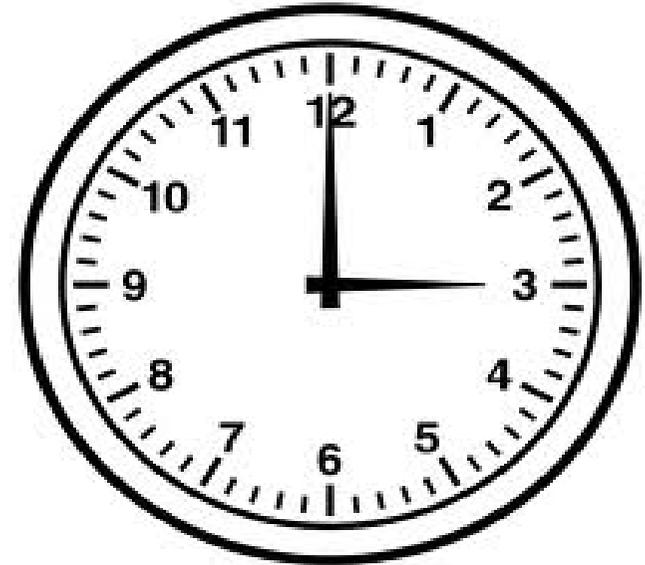
24Hr's a day

Sleep 8

Work 9

Meals 2

19



- How do you use the remaining 5 Hours?'
- How do you use the time you have on the week-end?
- To properly use the time we all have, it is vital that we establish priorities or else we will waste time on secondary things.

## Pascal on the Discipline of Solitude.

Blaise Pascal (19 June 1623 – 19 August 1662) was a French mathematician, physicist, inventor, writer and Christian philosopher. *People have a secret instinct which impels them to seek amusement and occupation abroad, and which arises from the sense of their constant unhappiness. They have another secret instinct, a remnant of the greatness of our original nature, which teaches them that happiness in reality consists only in rest, and not in stir.*



## **Pascal on the Discipline of Solitude.**

- *And of these two contrary instincts they form within themselves a confused idea, which hides itself from their view in the depths of their soul, inciting them to aim at rest through excitement, and always to fancy that the satisfaction which they have not will come to them, if, by surmounting whatever difficulties confront them, they can thereby open the door to rest..*  
*Pascal wrote these things long before TV series, sports, movies, YouTube, meaningless smart-phone apps and other forms of entertainment which so occupy our minds.*



## **Pascal on the Discipline of Solitude.**

- *Think about it. How many people do you know of who can just sit quietly “in their own chamber” as Pascal put it?*
- *Why can't they? Why don't families have evening meals together? Why don't people keep weekends free of meetings and obligations?*
- *Of course, some keep busy because they are people-pleasers (they can't say no), others are too busy because they want to show off (“I work 70 hour weeks!”).*
- *Some people keep busy because they want to stay away from home as much as possible (they can't stand their spouses or kids). The list goes on and on. But surely Pascal is right. Busyness and distraction divert us from thinking deeply.*

## **We need to hear from God.**

### **How does God speak to us?**

Most Christians don't have a problem talking to God, they neglect to do it at times and quickly remember when challenges arise, but many Christians don't listen to the Lord.

Some don't know how to, some don't care to and still others hear him and choose to ignore him and in so doing silence him.



## **We need to hear from God.**

**All too often though, it is busyness and noise that drowns out God's voice.**

**Revelation 3:20.**

*Here I am, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person and they with me.*

- Jesus will not speak guidance and direction into our lives through a closed door like some unwanted visitor or salesman.
- Perhaps you too busy with work or even ministry, maybe you have time for your favourite TV programs or gym or sport, but the Lord gets your left overs.

## **Are household chores keeping you busy?**

**Martha complained that Mary was sitting at Jesus feet.**

**Luke 10:38-42.**

*As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?*

*Tell her to help me! Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*

## **Are you too busy to help strangers.**

- **Many missionaries started their ministries by been helpful. Are we too busy to help those in need?**

**Col 4:5.**

*Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; **make the most of every opportunity.** (redeeming the time).*

**Hebrews.13:1-3.**

*Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.*

*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.*

*Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.*

## **A need does not constitute a call.**

**Don't feel guilty about resting.**

**Luke 5:15,16.**

*Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

**Mark 6:30,31.**

*The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.*



## **The Discipline of Solitude.**

**Question: "What is a quiet time?"** [Got questions](#)

**Answer:** A quiet time is an important part of a Christian's everyday life, for this is when he goes to a comfortable and rather secluded place in (usually) his own home, where he can draw close to God with no distractions. It should be a place where there are no interruptions from TV, telephone, family member interactions or traffic noises, in other words, silence. A quiet time is a set-aside part of each day for a meeting between a believer and God. It consists of reading a part of the Bible of the believer's own choosing, and praying.

(REMEMBER THAT LISTENING IS A VITAL PART OF PRAYER AND REQUIRES SILENCE).

## What is a quiet time?

Every believer needs a quiet time with the Lord. If Jesus Himself needed it, how much more do we? Jesus frequently withdrew from the others to commune with His Father

**Matthew 26:36.**

*“Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray’”*

**Mark 1:35.**

*“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed”*

**Luke 5:16.**

*“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed”*

## What is a quiet time?

The length of the quiet time does not matter, but it should be enough time to meditate on what was read and then pray about it or anything else that comes to mind.

Drawing near to God is a rewarding experience, and once a regular habit of quiet time is created, a specific time for study and prayer is eagerly looked forward to. If our schedules are so full and pressing that we feel we cannot carve out some time daily to meet with our heavenly Father, then a revision of our schedules to weed out the “busyness” is in order.

**A note of caution:** some Eastern religions that teach the principles of meditation include instructions on “emptying the mind” by concentrating on repeating a sound or a particular word over and over.

## What is a quiet time?

Doing so leaves room for Satan to enter and to wreak havoc in our minds. Instead, Christians should obey God's Word.

### **Philippians 4:8.**

*“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.”*

Filling one's mind with these thoughts bring peace and please God.

Our quiet time should be a time of transformation through the renewing of our minds (**Romans 12:2**), not through the emptying of them.

## Why have a quiet time every day?

**For fellowship.** We were created for this  
(Revelation 4:11 & John 14:23.)

**We renew our strength.**

**Isaiah 40:28-31.**

*He gives power to the weak, and to  
those who have no might  
He increases strength.*

*Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men  
shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew  
their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not  
faint.*



## Choose a definite time.

Don't try find the time, make time)

### **Daniel 6:10.**

*Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem.*

*Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.*

- **If anyone can set us an example of the importance of prayer it is Daniel, a man who had a high office and stood out above everyone else that his behaviour impacted a heathen king.**

## **Planning an effective quiet time.**

### **Choose a definite place.**

(A quiet place where you can meet with God undisturbed.)

### **Matthew 6:5.**

- *But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.  
And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.  
Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. This, then, is how you should pray:*
- **An imprisoned Pastor used a sewer for his quiet time.**

## **Choose a definite time.**

- Pastor Chen spent eighteen years in a prison work camp in China. Because he came from a background of moderate wealth and opportunity the guards at the camp worked hard to break his spirit and indoctrinate him. He was so hungry at times that he was tempted to eat toothpaste. He was separated from his wife and his young church. While he was in prison, his wife died.

One of his greatest hardships was that he had no privacy to worship or pray or read or memorize the Scripture. He was under constant surveillance. Frequently he prayed that God would allow him a place of privacy so he could enjoy fellowship with God.

## **Choose a definite time.**

- Soon the prison officials gave him a new assignment. In order to break his spirit and indoctrinate him they gave him the most difficult work assignment in the camp. They assigned him to the camp cesspool.
- The sewer pit where he worked served 60,000 prisoners. His assignment was to scoop out human waste to be used for fertilizer. No one else wanted the job because it was lonely and repulsive and they feared deadly diseases.
- His heart was broken when he went to work on his new assignment. Day after day working in the foul pit he wondered if his prayers were heard. To withstand the hardship he sang and prayed and quoted scripture aloud. One day it occurred to him that his assignment was a specific answer to prayer.

## **Choose a definite time.**

- Because he worked in such a foul hole none of the guards would get anywhere near him. He worked completely alone. He could pray and sing and quote scripture as loud as he wanted. He began to thank God and rejoice. There was no one there to hear him but his faithful God. His cesspool assignment lasted six years and miraculously he never contracted a disease from it.
- When he was released the church for which he had labored and prayed had exploded in growth and vitality. He traveled to poor villages where he saw the hand of God at work. He represented the cause of the suffering church in China around the world.

## Choose a definite time.

- Speaking before a huge missionary conference years later he told the story of God's faithfulness to him in prison
- With bright eyes he spoke of the fellowship that he enjoyed with the Lord in the prison cesspool. Standing before the huge crowd the small Chinese pastor began to sing the song that he used to sing in the prison sewer.
- *I come to the garden alone  
While the dew is still on the roses  
And He walks with me  
and he talks with me  
And He tells me I am His own  
And the joy we share  
as we tarry there  
None other has ever known.*



## Choose a definite time.

- Pastor Chen had learned the secret to rejoicing is not perfect circumstances but a consciousness of the presence of the Lord Jesus. “... in his presence is fullness of joy...” (Psalm 16:11)
- When you are discouraged by difficult circumstances, misunderstanding, pressures, responsibilities, or outright persecution, rejoice.
- The presence of Jesus can turn a cesspool into a garden.



## **Hungry people hear from God.**

### **Psalm 119:145-152.**

*I call with all my heart; answer me, Lord, and I will obey your decrees. I call out to you; save me and I will keep your statutes. I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word. My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.*

*Hear my voice in accordance with your love; preserve my life, Lord, according to your laws. Those who devise wicked schemes are near, but they are far from your law. Yet you are near, Lord, and all your commands are true.*



**Hungry for God**

# Hungry people hear from God.

## Psalm 130:1-6.

- 1 Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;*
- 2 Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.*
- 3 If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?*
- 4 But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.*
- 5 I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.*
- 6 I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*

# How to Practice the Discipline of Solitude.

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- Throughout his life Moses would often set himself apart to be alone with God, often for extended periods of time. In Deuteronomy 9:18, Moses reminds the Israelites that he practiced solitude and fasting “before the LORD for forty days and forty nights” on their behalf. Such passages can make us uncomfortable and despairing of our own lack of discipline.
- Moses could spend 40 days in solitude while we struggle to spend 40 minutes alone with God! But with effort, we, too, can practice the discipline of solitude.

# **Things to consider when practicing solitude.**

## **1. Solitude doesn't require silence**

- Silence and solitude are complementary disciplines that aid our communion with God. But while silence almost always requires solitude, solitude does not necessarily require silence. We can use our time of solitude for prayer, verbal meditation on Scripture, singing psalms or hymns of praise or any other form of “noisy” activity.

## **2. Solitude requires planning**

- Our lives tend to be filled with people and events, making it unlikely we'll accidentally stumble into solitude.
- Being alone with God requires planning. Choose a place where you can be intimate with God and free from distractions.

# How to Practice the Discipline of Solitude.

## 3. Solitude requires time

- On most days the best we can do is to get away alone for a few minutes, or even an hour. We should cherish these times and guard them carefully. Yet while these solitary moments are necessary, they're hardly sufficient to meet our need for closeness with our Creator. We need to find ways to be alone with God for extended periods of solitude,

## **Solitude.**

- **What Solitude is not** is continue to be in isolation, because Christianity, its practice is to be in community.
- We only isolate ourselves for reproof, correction and for rest, to get right before Christ and focus on Him before we challenge others to get right with Him.
- If we become monks and remain in solitude and or cut ourselves off from others, we miss the point. The misuses of Discipline of Solitude or Silence have been many and have led people astray or to focus on the wrong things. Many monks through the centuries have focused on Solitude and Silence to the detriment of the commands and call of Christ Himself.

## **Solitude.**

- The monastic movement has been a great help to us to center and focus and be a place for retreats and a time away but not as a sole profession. Even in the present day and emerging churches see this practice as entering some form of silence to listen for the "still, small voice" taking Psalm 46 and changing it. "Be still" means to focus on God and surrender to Him, not to empty ourselves. Nor is it a breathing exercise, or a skewed, meditative vehicle that takes us away from Christ rather the Discipline of Solitude is to bring us closer in our center of attention upon Him as LORD.

## **Solitude.**

Solitude is a good tool to focus us on Christ and prepare us for community. It is not to isolate us from others! It is a preparatory, to line us up with Him. It is not about just being alone; it is about working on us so we are able to work with and in others too. God wants us in community but to function in community we have to be healthy. The Discipline of Solitude is an opportunity for self evaluation, reflection and so we are quite to be able to learn and work with God be used by what we have and are so we can be better for His Glory.

## **{POEM} Too busy to pray.**

*I knelt to pray but not for long, I had too much to do. I had to hurry  
and get to work or bills would soon be due.*

*So I knelt and said a hurried prayer, And jumped up off my knees.  
My Christian duty was now done My soul could rest at ease.*

*All day long I had no time To spread a word of cheer.*

*No time to speak of Christ to friends, They'd laugh at me I'd fear.*

*No time, no time, too much to do, That was my constant cry,*

*No time to give to souls in need But at last the time, the time to die.*

*I went before the Lord, I came, I stood with downcast eyes.*

*For in his hands God held a book; It was the book of life.*

*God looked into his book and said "Your name I cannot find.*

*I once was going to write it down... But never found the time.*

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