



DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

# SOLITUDE

## WHAT IS IT?

SOLITUDE IS THE PRACTICE OF BEING ALONE WITH GOD SO THAT HE CAN RESTORE WHOLENESS TO OUR MINDS, HEARTS, AND SOULS.

## OBJECTIVES

IDENTIFY THE BUSYNESS IN OUR LIVES AND CONFRONT OUR NEED FOR STILLNESS

GROW IN PRACTICES THAT UNLOCK THE POWER OF SOLITUDE IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES

LEARN HOW GOD USES SOLITUDE TO HEAL, CLEANSE, AND GROW US

## SESSION ONE | BEING ALONE (WITH GOD)

Begin by catching up on one another's lives. What is something recent that is bringing you joy? What is something recent that is causing you stress?

1. Do you have any experience with the practice of solitude? If so, how was your experience? Fulfilling? Frustrating? Distracted?

2. How do you hope to grow as we progress through this guide?

***Loneliness or clutter are not our only alternatives. We can cultivate an inner solitude and silence that sets us free from loneliness and fear. Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment. (Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline)***

## **Never Alone**

Being alone can be frightening. We are left to confront our thoughts, feelings, and deepest longings. We don't always like what we find, e.g., stress or guilt. Our natural impulse is to distract in any way we can. And, in recent times, distraction has become easier and more prevalent than ever. All we have to do is grab that mobile device from our pockets and we have the world, and a world of distractions, at our fingertips. No more discomfort. No more stress. No more guilt. No more alone.

Here's a dose of reality. Distraction might help temporarily. But it's like a mere bandage on a wound. It doesn't come close to healing the real issue in our minds, hearts, and souls. We long for God. That's the heart of the matter. We were created to be with Him. When that relationship is absent, or even not what it should be, we fall into disarray. Among other things, solitude becomes very difficult. When we are alone, we feel, well, alone.

The good news is that solitude can be life changing. That's not an overstatement. Being alone can transform our minds, hearts, and souls. That's because we are never truly alone. God is with us all the time. Solitude can be a space where we rediscover the reality of His healing presence. It can be a space where we find and are found by Him. Where we love and are loved more deeply than we ever imagined. That's the journey we are about to begin. Welcome to Session One.

## **Reimagining Solitude**

As we've said, solitude is more than simply being alone. It's being alone with the Maker and Shepherd of our souls, God Himself. Solitude is the practice of being alone with God so that He can restore wholeness to our minds, hearts, and souls.

The following scenarios briefly describe places we all find ourselves mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. We might call them crisis points. They are common ways in which the power and presence of God is excluded from our lives. Take some time to imagine each scenario. Enter into each and see which, if any, resonates with your experience. Be as honest as you can about how each makes you feel and then we'll discuss.

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*Scenario #1:* You've been struggling with guilt about an aspect of a relationship for some time. You can't get the details out of your mind. You know it's time to sit down with the person and talk it through, but anger or fear has prevented you. The feeling won't stop nagging.

*Scenario #2:* You feel overwhelmed. Life has thrown many tasks and worries at you and you're unsure how to survive, let alone move forward. You know something must change, but it isn't clear what. You feel stuck and even trapped.

*Scenario #3:* Something is missing. You're sure of it. You go to church. You study Scripture faithfully. You have a quiet time with God. You even serve at a local mission. Still, you aren't seeing the spiritual transformation you long to believe is possible. Maybe you even feel a bit distant from God. It's increasingly frustrating.

*Scenario #4:* You can't escape the pressure of impressing others. It drives your life. You do all you can to be liked and loved. It's never enough. You constantly feel like you aren't creating the right image, accomplishing the right things, or earning the right praise.

*Scenario #5:* You feel apathetic. Blah. Even humbug. Life has lost its vitality. You continue to press on, but it feels like you're just getting through each day. You look forward to bedtime, when the blasé world disappears. You're not sure what in the world would motivate you to do or be more.

Take two minutes of silence. Ask God to show you if any of these describes where you are right now. Simply listen, then launch into the questions below.

1. Do any of these scenarios approximate a crisis point in which you have or currently find yourself? If you are willing, share more with one another.

2. What have you done to cope with your crisis point? Has it been helpful? Frustrating?

Welcome, once again, to God's Kingdom, where there's always good news. God has prepared for us a space of healing amidst all of life's pains, trials, and crises. It's already waiting for us! You can access it. It's called solitude. All it requires is our time and our trust. We must make time and space to be alone with God and we must trust Him to meet us and work in the uncomfortable moments.

### **Solitude in God's Word**

We'll talk much more about ways to practice solitude in coming sessions. In this last section of Session One, let's dig into some Bible passages that highlight just how beautiful this practice is.

*Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him. Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken. (Psalm 62:1-2)*

*This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength. (Isaiah 30:15)*

1. What is the fruit of being alone in the stillness (i.e., solitude) with God?

2. How do you think God uses the practice of solitude to accomplish these things in our lives?

*Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. (Matthew 14:22-23)*

*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. (Mark 1:35)*

*After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. (Mark 9:2)*

1. Why do you think even Jesus Himself needed solitude in His life and ministry?

2. Imagine yourself as one of the disciples that Jesus took into solitude in Mark 9:2. Take a few moments to paint the scene in your mind's eye. What is it like to be there with Jesus? What would you like to ask Him to do in your life?

## **What to Expect**

Before you dig into the practice of solitude, here are a few things to expect along the way. First, you will very likely encounter distractions. Quiet invites a deluge of thoughts and emotions, some harmless and others menacing. This is perfectly normal. Minimize self-assessment in these moments. Refocus on your breathing and calmly ask God to turn your attention back to Him. You may need to do this multiple times. That's just fine. Your ability to stay focused will grow in time.

You may also experience negative emotions, like anxiety, guilt, or grief. Again, this is normal. Instead of seeing those as interruptions, invite God into them with you. Ask Him to help you process why you feel the way you do and listen for His voice.

Finally, expect God to be present. Some days His presence may feel obvious and powerful. Other days it may feel a bit quieter. Either way, He is faithful and at work. He loves you deeply and wants good for you. Solitude is an intimate encounter with God. It's a blessing and a gift. With Him, you'll find healing and renewal. He will shape you into the person He made you to be. Count on it.

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Ps. 139:23-24)*

## **Exercises for Session Two**

1. Experiment with solitude before your next meeting. If you are new to the practice, try setting aside a workable amount of time, even fifteen minutes, a few times. Make some time and space. Be as alone as you can (it's OK if you aren't isolated for miles on end!). Don't have an agenda for the time. Only plan to be with God. Express your love for Him. Ask Him to show you His love for you. Make note of any distractions, frustrations, insights, or gifts you encounter.

2. Complete the discussion questions for Session Two. Come ready to discuss!

## Interlude

You've finished the first session of this workshop! You're learning to walk into the heart of human experience—your life with God and others. It's so crucial that we cannot know joy, peace, and fulfillment to their fullest without it. Community is that central.

Don't forget that it's best to go on this sacred journey alongside others. Make some time to get together and deepen your relationships. Grab coffee just to chat. Go to a baseball game. Gather your families for a movie night. Do something that simply celebrates the joys of being human and knowing others. This is good for its own sake but will also help you grow as you complete future sessions.

***Solitude frees us, actually. This above all explains its primacy and priority among the disciplines. The normal course of day-to-day human interactions locks us into patterns of feeling, thought, and action that are geared to a world set against God. Nothing but solitude can allow the development of a freedom from the ingrained behaviors that hinder our integration into God's order. (Dallas Willard, Spirit of the Disciplines)***

## **SESSION TWO | CONTEMPLATION AND HEARING**

In Session One, we saw that God uses solitude to accomplish tremendous things in our lives. He meets us in the stillness, expresses His love for us, and heals our souls from what ails us. It's such a crucial practice that we see Jesus Himself making space for it. In this session, we will explore the first two of four blessings God ushers into our lives when we practice solitude: contemplation and hearing. In Session Three, we will look at the second two.

### **The Persistent Problem of Noise**

Let's begin here. Our lives are full of busyness and noise. We acclimate to, accept, and re-orient our souls towards the rugged pace and loud environment. The bad news is that this is soul-crushing. We all feel it. We all know it. It's time to be honest about it. It's going to be very difficult, if not impossible, to practice solitude if we can't be real about where we are.

1. What are the major noises and distractions in your life?

2. To what extent do you think these keep you from experiencing God's presence?

### **Solitude Fosters Contemplation**

Contemplation is a great blessing. When we contemplate, we slow down and become aware of God and all He's given to us. We pause, breathe deeply, and ponder the wonder of it all. We sense God's presence and meditate on His words. We become more in touch with His love for us. We discover that we are human beings (not human doings) with a special place in God's universe. In contemplation, we learn just how valuable those things are that noise and busyness crowd out.

Practically, when we contemplate, we simply turn our minds towards something. We aren't trying to "figure something out" so much as we are allowing ourselves to become aware and giving God space to move and speak as only He can. Psalm 27:4 does not explicitly use our word for contemplation, but it captures its essence perfectly.

*One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. (Psalm 27:4)*

In this passage, the Psalmist is contemplating the very presence of God. The Hebrew word for gaze, *chazah*, means to behold or contemplate with joy. The Hebrew word for seek, *baqar*, means to consider carefully and admire. In other words, the Psalmist's deepest desire is to behold the reality of God and be filled with joy, admiration, and fulfillment. That's contemplation. Let's put it into practice right now. If you're up for it, try one of the following exercises.

**Contemplate God's Creation.** Choose anything in the natural world, e.g., the stars, flower petals, fall leaves, or snowflakes, and turn your mind's gaze towards it. Take fifteen minutes and become fully aware of the beauty and intricacy of it. Allow God to guide your soul however He would like. You might find yourself praising or thanking God. You might be moved to tears by beauty. You might even recall just how special it is that God has made you.

**Contemplate Your Soul.** The Bible speaks to the power of examining one's soul. In Psalm 42, David says:

*"Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God." (Psalm 42:5)*

Take fifteen minutes or so and turn your mind's gaze to your soul. Rediscover that there is an immaterial part of you that can be healthy or unhealthy, just like the physical part. Ask God what He wants to show you about the health of your soul.

**Contemplate God's Presence.** God calls us to turn the gaze of our hearts and minds toward His presence with us. This is sometimes called contemplative prayer. We can and should spend time with God by simply beholding and enjoying His presence. Take fifteen minutes or so and turn your mind's gaze to the presence of God with you. Allow Him to recall anything to mind that He would like you to notice in this time.

1. What did you gain from this exercise in contemplation? Did God reveal anything?

2. Why do you think solitude is so crucial to contemplation?

### **Solitude Fosters Hearing**

Hearing, likewise, is a great gift. We are often unaware of the beauty of the quieter elements in life—the babbling brook, the wind in the trees, or the chirping of birds. God means for these to feed our souls with stillness and solitude. The concept is simple. If we want to hear the best things in life, we must be away from both internal and external noise. We must quiet our minds, hearts, and souls. We must place ourselves in a posture of hearing.

This is especially true when it comes to communion with God. Many of us are familiar with the practice of speaking to God. We praise, thank, and request things from Him. However, we are less familiar with the intentional act of listening to Him. This is tragic. Why? Because the Maker and Shepherd of our souls speaks. To us. To anyone who would draw near to hear. Here are just a few examples of how God has spoken:

*And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day. (Genesis 1:3)*

*In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. (Hebrews 1:1-2)*

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

*The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. (Psalm 19:1-4)*

1. What are the ways God speaks as revealed by these passages?

2. Which of these ways has God most often used to communicate with you?

Finally, God speaks to us individually. That's right. God has words for us through the Holy Spirit who dwells within. He will convict, guide, encourage, and even teach us how to pray.

When we practice solitude, we become more mindful. Even more, though, we begin to hear the voice of God. He affirms. He assures. He loves. He guides. God loves to communicate with us. When we slow down, get alone with Him, and listen, we become more attentive to His voice through Scripture, the Holy Spirit, wisdom, conviction, and His presence. This may seem too good to be true. Don't take my word for it. See the following passages:

*But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)*

*Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” (Acts 8:26-29)*

*While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:2-3)*

This is just a sampling of the ways God speaks to us by the Holy Spirit. Like any other relationship, we must place ourselves in a posture of listening if we are to hear. Solitude is the central practice that prepares our hearts to hear from God. It wrenches us from the throes of distraction and introduces us to the power of silence.

1. What did you learn from these passages about how God speaks in the lives of His followers?

2. Have you ever heard God’s voice clearly in your life? What were the circumstances? What was the experience like?

### **Exercises for Session Three**

1. Once again, make space for solitude in your life. Hopefully, over the past weeks, you've identified some physical locations that help foster this practice. Try expanding your skill by spending longer periods of time alone with God. Pick something from this session to focus on. Ask God to meet you in your contemplation and listening.
2. Complete the discussion questions for Session Three. Come ready to discuss!

***The invitation to solitude and silence is ... an invitation to enter more deeply into the intimacy of relationship with the One who waits just outside the noise and busyness of our lives for a space within which meaningful connection can occur. It is an invitation to communication and communion with the One who is always present even when our awareness has been dulled by distraction. It is an invitation to the adventure of spiritual transformation in the deepest places of our being, an adventure that will result in greater freedom and authenticity and surrender to God than we have yet experienced. (Ruth Haley Barton, Invitation to Silence and Solitude)***

## SESSION THREE | CLEANSING AND RENEWAL

Solitude is a journey with God. We don't always know what to expect, and that's the beauty of it. It's a practice of surrendering space in our lives to His will and ways. Get ready. When we are alone with God, He cleanses our souls. Just like our physical bodies need to be cleansed of the sweat and toil of life, so do our souls, daily, need to be washed.

Our souls are wounded both by sin and the brokenness of the world. This happens in myriad ways. Here's the challenge. We cannot clean our own souls. Neither can the people around us. Only God can do that. And He must do so before we can experience the renewal for which we yearn.

So, buckle up. In this session, let's explore the final two blessings God ushers into our lives when we practice solitude.

### **The Gift of Cleansing**

It's not unusual for people to experience some angst when they are alone with God. In fact, I once challenged a friend to be alone with God in the fifteen-minute car ride home from work. He testified that it was the longest, most painful fifteen minutes of the day. Hyperbole? Probably not. Our souls are not accustomed to silence.

Even more, in solitude, like it or not, we lay bare the deepest spaces of who we are. All the worries, fears, and discomforts that the noise in our lives drown suddenly have nowhere to hide. So, yes, solitude can be uncomfortable. At times, it probably will be.

Has solitude ever caused you this kind of discomfort? If so, why do you think that is?

Most things that are truly good for us entail some sacrifice and discomfort. That's the way it goes with everything from relationships to promotions to marathons. The cleansing of our souls is no different. God walks with us into the spaces of rebellion, hiding, sin, and brokenness. Light is the best disinfectant. God brings these things to light in our lives.

*When [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. (John 16:8-13)*

1. Have you encountered discomfort when you've practiced solitude? If you are willing, share your experience.

2. In John 16:8-13, why do you think Jesus pairs the Holy Spirit's conviction of sin with understanding the truth? What might the truth be to which He refers?

Here's the hope (with God, there's always hope!). The exposure of our sin and brokenness paves the way for other practices that are crucial to the health of our souls. Let's briefly review each one.

*God's exposure of our sin fosters the practice of **confession**.* Confession is the act of saying out loud, to God and others, the sin we've committed and the good we've left undone.

*God's exposure of our sin fosters the practice of **contrition**.* Contrition is the practice of meditating on the gravity of one's sin and making time to grieve what we've done. While God clearly does not want us to wallow in regret, sadness over our sin is perfectly appropriate and healing.

*God's exposure of our sin fosters the practice of **repentance**.* Repentance is the commitment to turn and walk away from one's sin and instead pursue righteousness.

1. Why do you think sadness over one's sin (i.e., contrition) is so important? How can we be contrite and yet avoid wallowing in our sin in an unhealthy way?
  
2. Think of a time when you confessed and repented of sin. How did that process affect you?
  
3. Take a few minutes and ask God to reveal anything for which He wants you to confess and repent. How did God meet you in these moments?

Let's sum it up. One of the blessings of solitude is that, when we set aside time to be alone, God uses it to cleanse our souls. He does this by exposing the deepest parts of who we are to His light. We are then free to practice confession, contrition, and repentance. These practices are inexpressibly good for us.

### **The Gift of Renewal**

God then brings about our renewal. Cleansed of our sin, He makes us into the new creatures we were always meant to be. This is a process we undergo again and again as we grow in Christ. We are renewed and we are being renewed. That's the way God works. He's preparing us to co-labor with Him in loving others well. And He's preparing us to enjoy eternity with Him. What, specifically, does it mean that God renews us?

First, God transforms our minds. Instead of being haunted by thought patterns of worry, fear, and anxiety, He ushers us into spaces of faith, hope, and love. Our minds become filled with God's goodness and His Kingdom purposes. That's renewal of the mind. This happens, especially, when we turn our gaze towards Him in solitude.

*Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)*

Second, God transforms our emotional states. Where we were once overwhelmed by addiction, stress, or hurry, He offers peace—a pervasive sense of security and wellbeing. As we come to trust more in God, He transforms our emotions, which dramatically impacts our experience of life. Again, solitude is a central environment for this work of the Holy Spirit.

*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)*

Third, God transforms our will, i.e., what the Bible refers to as the heart. Before we know Jesus, we are shackled by what the Scriptures call the flesh. We are tossed about with the urge to do whatever we want whenever we want. This destroys our souls. God takes those disordered desires and reorders them towards Himself and His Kingdom. Once again, solitude is key.

*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:16-17, 22-24)*

1. Based on what you've learned so far, how do you think God uses solitude to bring about renewal in these three aspects of who we are (mind, emotions, and will)?

2. Compare your interest in solitude now versus when you first began this guide. Do you feel more or less motivated? More or less excited? Why?

### **Exercises for Session Four**

In the final session things get very practical. We will survey various ways to practice solitude. So, get ready. Complete the exercises. Come ready to share!

***Alone, without distractions, we put ourselves in a place where God can reveal things to us that we might not notice in the normal preoccupations of life. Solitude opens a space where we can bring our empty and compulsive selves to God. And no matter how well we “do” silence, God is there to accept, receive and love us. God longs for us to be our true self in Christ. He wants us to be who we are meant to be. In solitude we see how little we embrace our true identity in Christ. And we find the truth of who we are in Christ. We are the beloved, and God is pleased with us. This identity is given; it is not earned. (Adele Calhoun, Handbook of Spiritual Disciplines)***

## SESSION FOUR | PRACTICES OF SOLITUDE

There are many avenues to experience solitude. While there is no single right way, there are important patterns to keep in mind. In this final session, we will explore these patterns, and you will help one another establish some healthy rhythms of solitude.

### **Daily Solitude**

We all need a regular rhythm of aloneness with God. That's a principle of solitude. If we are to reap its fullest benefits, we must make time daily. The good news is that there's room for all kinds of creativity with this. You might, for instance, go for a brief walk during which you turn your attention to God's presence. It might be pausing at one's desk at work or stepping into another room to escape the noise at home.

Whatever the specifics, we need time daily to refocus on the presence of God. To enjoy Him. To listen to Him. Ask God to reconnect your heart to the quieter things and to His voice.

Be creative and help one another to arrive at a sustainable way of practicing solitude. What daily rhythms would best fit into your life?

### **Extended Solitude**

We also need lengthier times to be with God. In this way, we can hear from God slowly and leisurely. We can take in the beauty of the world and discover the health of our souls. Think in terms of at least half a day in solitude. You will see the full benefits if you can make this a regular monthly or bi-monthly occasion.

In these spaces, we come with no agenda. Our heart is simply to meet God and allow Him to decide what to do with the time. Bring a Bible and a journal to record any thoughts, prayers, poems, or ways in which God speaks.

The logistics of extended solitude are a bit more complex, but manageable when we plan for it. You'll likely want to designate a space in your home or else get away to a park or library. This will require that we coordinate our schedules.

Remember, time is not found, although we often speak this way. It is made. We will also likely need the help of close friends and family. For instance, perhaps your spouse can watch the kids for half a day while you retreat. Then, you can later return the favor for him or her.

Discuss together the various aspects of extended solitude. What might it look like for you to practice it regularly over the course of the year?

### **Individual Retreat**

It is tremendously beneficial to our souls if we can set aside time, perhaps once a year, to take a retreat, i.e., an overnight to spend lengthier time with God. When we have more concentrated time, God works through the layers of who we are and reassures us of His love and acceptance in ways we miss in the hustle and bustle of life. It takes some commitment, but it is life changing.

Again, you'll need to think through the logistics. It could be a park lodge, hotel, monastery, or even a designated space in your home. I highly recommend Ruth Haley Barton's book, *Invitation to Retreat*, to help guide you along the way. Be sure to consult with your pastors as well for any insights on how to retreat well.

### **Corporate Retreat**

Finally, retreat can be done in a group as well. Of course, for it to be a solitude retreat, you will need time alone. That's a given. But there is value in going along with others. Participants can spend significant time alone and then come back together to debrief and help one another interpret their time. This happens through discussion, prayer, and corporate listening to God.

Church small groups can be a great place to begin. Gather a few people (or the entire group) and plan for corporate retreat. And, again, consult your pastors for help with this.

## Reflections on Solitude

At this point, your head may be spinning a bit. That's a lot of ways to practice solitude. Here is what's key. Begin slowly. Add one element at a time. I recommend you start with daily solitude. That will be the most impactful way to nourish your soul through God's presence. Once you've made that a regular part of life, move on to another way to practice solitude.

1. Revisit the section entitled, "What to Expect," from Session One. Now that you have practiced solitude, what challenges have you encountered? How have you worked through those?

2. How have your relationship with God, your awareness of His presence, or your understanding of yourself changed through this practice? What was meaningful? What was challenging?

3. How do you plan to begin to practice solitude as part of your regular spiritual life?

4. How do you plan to celebrate the good things God has done over these past weeks?