

Week 6: Solitude

“Jesus calls us from loneliness to solitude...We can cultivate an inner solitude and silence that sets us free from loneliness and fear. Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment” Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, pg 96.

“[W]e need solitude if we intend to unmask the false self and its important-looking image. 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” Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, pg 130

Try one or more of these (taken/adapted from Foster and Calhoun):

Sit with God

Spend fifteen minutes or more along with God. In a place where you can't be interrupted, intentionally place yourself in the presence of God. Recognize that the Lord is as near as your own breathing. Inhale God's breath of life; exhale all that weighs on you. Simply be alone with God

Run/Walk with God

Go for a walk or a run. Dedicate the time ahead of you to God. After the time is up, consider how it was for you to be alone with God. Was it hard? Good? Did God speak to you in any way?

Day Alone with God

Set aside 4-8 hours for time alone with God. Go to a retreat center (see suggestions below), quiet chapel, park, etc. Don't stay in your home. Take only your Bible.

Retreat with God

Plan a day, overnight, or weekend retreat to a quiet place like a cabin in the woods or one of the retreat centers listed below. Plan your time with God, utilizing the various spiritual disciplines as many of them complement the practice of solitude. You could also consider participating in some of the planned spiritual retreats some of the centers below provide if planning your own retreat is too overwhelming. With practice and experience, you will become more comfortable planning your own retreats.

Retreat centers in/near Southwest Michigan

[The Sanctuary at Bear Creek](#) in Allegan

[GilChrist Retreat Center](#) in Three Rivers

[The Hermitage](#) in Three Rivers

[Lindenwood Retreat and Conference Center](#) in Donaldson, Indiana

If you'd like to learn more about spiritual transformation and various ways to invite Holy Spirit to work in and through you, these are great places to start:

[*Invitation to Retreat: The Gift and Necessity of Time Away with God*](#) by Ruth Haley Barton

[*Sacred Pathways: Nine Ways to Connect with God*](#) by Gary Thomas

[*Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*](#) by Ruth Haley Barton

[*Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*](#) by Richard J. Foster

[*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*](#) by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

[*Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus, Become Like Him, Do as He Did*](#) by John Mark Comer