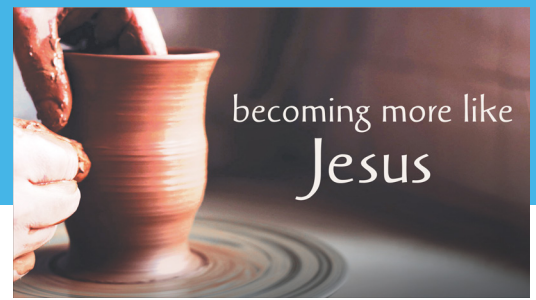


# Discussion Questions

November 23, 2025



## Becoming More Like Jesus: The Gift of Solitude Luke 5:12-16

In this message we explored the spiritual discipline of silence and solitude - the regular practice Jesus himself depended on to stay connected to the Father, rooted in his identity as the Beloved Son, and clear about his true mission. Using Luke 5:15-16 as the main text ("But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness and prayed"), we saw how Jesus habitually escaped the crushing demands of ministry to be alone in desolate places (Greek: eremos; Hebrew: midbar). Far from being empty, the wilderness is the place where God speaks (medaber) most clearly. We confronted our addiction to distraction, the difference between good tired and dangerous soul-fatigue, and the metaphor of a shaken jar of river water: only when we "set the jar down" in silence does the sediment settle, the water clear, and we become able to see ourselves, our sin, and God's loving presence. The sermon ended with a strong invitation and practical steps to begin practicing solitude this week so we can hear the Father's tender voice and live out of our true identity as beloved sons and daughters.

1. The sermon mentioned "Industrial Carpet Boredom" (waiting at the doctor's office with nothing to do). Do you remember what that felt like? Do you miss it, or are you glad those days are gone?

### 2. Read Luke 5:15-16

The text says, "But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness." Why is the word "often" so significant here?

If you were a consultant for Jesus' ministry, what would you have advised Him to do when His fame started "going viral"? Why is His withdrawal counter-intuitive?

### 3. Read Mark 1:35-38

After a time of solitude, Jesus told Peter He wanted to leave, even though everyone was looking for Him. The sermon suggested solitude gave Jesus the power to say "no" to a good thing (healing more people) to do the best thing (God's will). Can you share a time when being "busy for God" actually distracted you from being "with God"?

### 4. Read Hosea 2:14

How does God describe what he wants to do in the wilderness with His distracted people?

What does "speak tenderly" reveal about God's heart when he leads us into solitude?

5. **The Midbar & Daber:** We learned that the Hebrew word for "wilderness" shares a root with the word for "speak." How does changing your view of silence - from "emptiness" to "the place where God speaks" - change your willingness to try it?

6. **Dangerous Tired vs Good Tired:** Would you say your soul feels "dangerously tired"? (A chronic inner fatigue that accumulates over time, often masked by compulsive busyness) Why or why not?

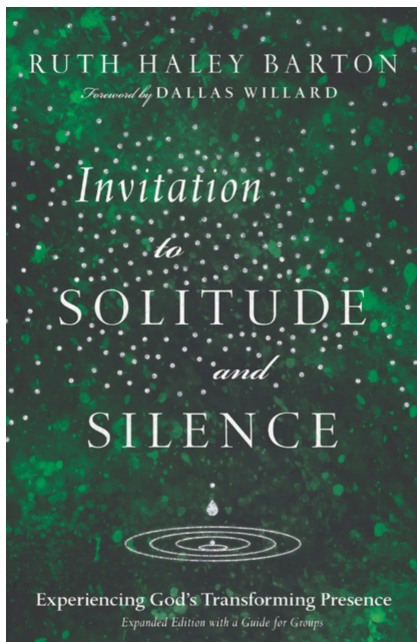
7. **The Muddy Jar:** Ruth Haley Barton compares our souls to a jar of river water. As long as we keep moving, the water stays muddy. When you stop moving and “set the jar down,” what is the “sediment” that usually comes to the surface for you first? (Anxiety, to-do lists, guilt, boredom?)
8. **The “spiritual law of gravity”** Barton said you cannot force the sediment to settle by pushing it down or stirring it; you have to wait for gravity to do the work. We often try to “fix” our inner chaos by adding more effort (stirring the jar). What does “trying to force the sediment down” look like in your life? (e.g., trying to control a situation by over-planning, venting to everyone but God, or numbing out with media to make the feeling go away?)
9. **Identity vs. Performance:** In the wilderness (Luke 4), Jesus fought the temptation to prove His identity through performance, popularity, or power. Where are you currently tempted to find your worth in performance, popularity, or power instead of the Father’s declaration “You are my beloved”?

How might regular solitude help re-anchor your identity?

10. **Practice for the Week:** The challenge this week is to “join Jesus in the wilderness.”
- Pick a place: Identify a physical chair, a spot in your car, or a park bench.
  - Pick a time: Start small (15 minutes).
  - Banish the phone: Leave it in another room.
  - Set the Jar Down: Don’t try to “achieve” anything. Just sit.  
Simply sit, breathe, open hands, and wait:  
Maybe use a breath prayer: inhale “Emmanuel,” exhale “You are with me”
11. **Group Accountability:** What represents a realistic goal for you regarding silence this week? (e.g., “I will try 10 minutes of no-phone silence after getting my coffee,” or “I will sit in my chair for 15 minutes before the kids wake up.”)
12. **Prayer Focus**
- Close by practicing 5 minutes of absolute silence together as a group. (yes, right in the group - practice together!). Then consider closing by praying Hosea 2:14: “Lord, allure us into the wilderness and speak tenderly to us there. Let us hear again that we are your beloved.” Amen.

**Luke 5:12-16 (NLT)**

12 In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. "Lord," he said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean." 13 Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared. 14 Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened... 15 But despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

**Good Tired:**

- The feeling you get after a job well done or a long hike. It's temporary

**Dangerous Tired:**

- A chronic inner fatigue that accumulates over months. Often masked by excessive activity and compulsive overworking

**Signs of Dangerous Tired:**

- Inability to stop (feeling like you have to keep going).
- Going numb (not feeling highs or lows).
- Escapism (binge-watching or doom-scrolling because you are too depleted to choose life-giving activities).
- Spiritual Deafness (struggling to hear God).

**Blaise Pascal**

...all the unhappiness of men arises from one single fact, that they cannot stay quietly in their own room.

**Luke 5:15 (NLT)**

15 But despite Jesus' instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases.

**Luke 5:16 (NLT)**

16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness and prayed.

**Mark 1:35 says,** "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place [Eremos], and there he prayed."

**Luke 4:42 says,** "At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place [Eremos]."

**Hebrew word for Wilderness is Midbar מִדְבָּר**

**Midbar מִדְבָּר** - Shares the exact same root letter as:

**Medaber מְדַבֵּר** (to speak)

**Daber דָּבַר** (Word)

### **Numbers 1:1 (NIV)**

*The Lord spoke [Daber] to Moses in the wilderness [Midbar]...*

### **Hosea 2:14 (NIV)**

*"Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the wilderness [Midbar] and speak [Daber] tenderly to her."*

### **Solitude ≠ Emptiness**

### **Solitude = God's Presence**

### **Luke 4:3-9**

*"If you are the Son of God... turn this stone into bread."*

*"If you are the Son of God... throw yourself down from the Temple."*

*"Bow down and worship me, and I'll give you all the kingdoms of the world."*

### **Mark 1:38 (NIV)**

*38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else - to the nearby villages - so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."*

### **Ruth Haley Barton - An Invitation to Solitude & Silence**

..you are like a jar of river water all shaken up. What you need is to sit still long enough that the sediment can settle and the water can become clear.

### **Solitude is the act of setting the jar down.**

### **Henry Nouwen**

The first thing we experience in solitude is not the presence of God but the presence of our own demons.

### **Dallas Willard - The Spirit of the Disciplines**

You will need to stay there long enough for the inner being to become different. Muddy water becomes clear if you only let it be still for a while. You will know this finding of soul and God is happening by an increased sense of who you are and a lessening of the feeling that you have to do this, that, and the other thing.

### **Richard Foster - Celebration of Discipline**

Solitude leads to freedom... freedom from fear, freedom from anxiety, and freedom to be attentive to the needs of others.

### **Jesus was the most present person in history... because he was the most centered person in history.**

### **Solitude is rebellion. It is rebellion against the tyranny of noise**

### **Regularly join Jesus in the place of Solitude & Silence -**

1. Pick a place: Identify a physical chair, a spot in your car, or a park bench.
2. Pick a time: Start small (15 minutes).
3. Banish the phone: Leave it in another room.
4. Set the Jar Down: Don't try to "achieve" anything.

Simply sit, breathe, open hands, and wait:

maybe use a breath prayer: inhale "Emmanuel," exhale "You are with me"