



SOLITUDE

PRACTICING Jesus

SERMON
STUDY

10.20.2024

Leader Corner

Practicing Jesus

Solitude

Mark 1:29-39

God hard wired his creation, especially you and me, for rest and quiet. We require down time and sleep. But even this “down” time can often be draining rather than refreshing. Jesus modeled for us intentional down time. It was the type of time that deeply nourished his soul and will ours if we boldly dare to follow. The thing is, for most of us, Jesus is quietly there with us, day and night. But he doesn’t always advertise himself. Certainly he speaks through creation, people, situations, his Word, but mostly we aren’t paying attention. Psalm 46:10 reminds us to, “Be still,” but that isn’t just a moment, it is the ongoing, intentional action of slowing down enough to pay attention to Jesus. Let that be our experience this week.

Main Idea: The rest of Jesus is crucial for the rest of our lives.

Main Practice: Quietening your mind and heart in order to hear the voice of Jesus.

Main Teaching: Mark 1:29-39

A few more housekeeping items for this week:

- **Pro Tip:** Encourage each group member to text one other member a word of encouragement this coming week.
- Leave ample time to do the “with Practice” section as this will be the most formational part of our journey.
- At the end of our 12 week journey we are hoping everyone will commit to ongoing rhythms after what we experience during this series.

As You Begin Your Group Time:

How did your chosen practice go? What is something about prayer and this past week that you’d like to share with the group?

Connect with Prayer

Have someone pray the following over the group:

We pause, Father, to commune with you. Help us to be still and know that you are God. Ease any tense muscles or strained nerves or wrought-up emotions. Let us be relaxed in body and calm in spirit so that we may be more responsive to your presence. . . . We pause, Father, to commune with you. Amen (Roy E. Dickerson in *Daily Prayer Companion*).

with Praise

As a group watch, listen to the song: “Be Still & Know” by Steven Curtis Chapman

Next, read in unison this poem from St. Teresa of Avila: *Let nothing disturb you, nothing frighten you; all things are passing; God never changes. Patient endurance attains all things; whoever possesses God is wanting in nothing. God alone suffices.*

Finally, have someone read the hymn: “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” by Helen Howarth Lemmel

O soul are you weary and troubled / No light in the darkness you see / There's light for a look at the Savior / And life more abundant and free // Turn your eyes upon Jesus / Look full in his wonderful face / And the things of earth will grow strangely dim / In the light of his glory and grace / His word shall not fail you he promised / Believe him and all will be well / Then go to a world that is dying / His perfect salvation to tell // Turn your eyes upon Jesus / Look full in his wonderful face / And the things of earth will grow strangely dim / In the light of his glory and grace // O soul are you weary and troubled / No light in the darkness you see / There's light for a look at the Savior / And life more abundant and free // Turn your eyes upon Jesus / Look full in his wonderful face / And the things of earth will grow strangely dim / In the light of his glory and grace

with Principle

"Once we are rested, the quiet is where we go to find God. Because it's there, in the quiet, that the inner roar of our world of noise - the distraction, the chaos, and all the lies - fades away, and what shimmers in its place is the peace and presence of God."

(Practicing the Way, page 182)

1. When was the last time you sat in silence? How long did that last? What specifically interrupted or ended that time?
2. Refer back to your Practicing Jesus Journal. What scriptural takeaways or main points would you like to talk about?
3. As a group, read Mark 1:29-39 & Luke 4:42-43.
 - a. What do we learn about Jesus in this story? What are all the things he does?
 - b. How does Jesus model the priority of silence and solitude? How does he effect his next steps?
4. Read and reflect over the following Scriptures, Psalm 46:10, Psalm 37:7, Lamentations 3:25-26, Isaiah 30:15.
 - a. As we think about a rhythm of silence and solitude or even experiencing this for the time this week, what do you need to "clear out" of your daily routine in order to experience this practice well?
 - b. Specific spaces around us can help usher in silence. List out your favorite spots in creation, in town, in your house. What is a space that could be used to practice silence?
5. Before moving on to the "with Practice" section, pause for a few moments (maybe 30 seconds or a minute). Then, have someone read to the group Romans 12:1-2 specifically from the Message translation.

with Practice

Our main practice for this week is to quiet our minds and hearts in order to hear the voice of Jesus.

- As a group, **choose** one of the following practices and take time to experience this together.
- Then **reflect** in the "Practice" section of your journal.
- Finally, **identify** how you will train this week.

Practice #1: Breath Prayer:

- Choose a place that feels comfortable, safe, open and available to God, where you can't be interrupted or distracted.
- Sit quietly for a few moments, breathing deeply, becoming aware of God's presence with you and your desire to be present with God.
- Recognize that the Lord is as near as your own breathing. Simply be alone with God.
- Begin with 1 minute and work your way up to spending 5 minutes in silence.
- Inhale God's breath of life; exhale all things that weigh on you. You may choose to do what's known as a "**Breath Prayer.**" A traditional breath prayer is to inhale in, "Jesus, Son of God" and then exhale, "have mercy on me, a sinner."
- When it is time to return to others, leave the presence of God gently. Carry the sense of being alone with God with you into the next thing.

Practice #2: SELAH: Throughout the Psalms is this word "SELAH." It's intention is to get us to stop and notice Jesus.

Stop: Jesus invites you to PAUSE. Slow down. Don't rush this. Give space and time to quiet. Put away distractions.

Exhale: Next, slowly breath in and slowly breath out. Do the following as long as you'd like.

- As you inhale, pray, "*The LORD is my shepherd . . .*"
- As you exhale, pray, "*. . . I have everything I need.*"

Look: Now, look at a portion of Psalm 23. Be slow in your reading. Don't rush. Notice words that stand out.

Ask: Ask God to give you what you need.

"*Lord, show me how you can provide what I need in _____.*"
"*Lord, I feel (anxious). Fill my heart with peace.*"

Hear: Now it's time to listen to God. Once again, stop and breathe. Now pray "*Speak Lord. I am listening.*"

Don't rush this. Wait and listen for the Holy Spirit. Write down anything that you heard or that came to your mind.

*(Practice adapted from the "Practicing the Way Course Guide," John Mark Comer & CIY SELAH App)

For Further Study

Firsts & Lasts: Dedicate the first and last minutes of each day to Jesus setting aside space for quiet listening. This could be 5 minutes or 30 minutes. If you're a parent, this is a great time to intentionally connect with your children (screen free), with a focused and quieted approach.

Other Resources:

- *Invitation to Silence and Solitude*- Ruth Haley Barton
- *An Unhurried Leader*- Alan Fadling
- *Sanctuary of the Soul*- Richard Foster