

CHAPTER TEN

How to Spend a Day (or Hours, or Minutes) in Solitude

1 - Let's move one step further in our exploration of the practice of solitude and silence and discover how we might spend a day there.

2 - Preparing to spend a day in solitude and silence, we encounter principles that can be applied to shorter periods—even hours or minutes.

3 - In biblical rhythms the new day begins at sundown. In Jewish practice the Sabbath is ushered in by the Friday evening meal.

4 - A helpful practice in shaping an orderly life: use the period after the evening meal and before going to bed to prepare for the next day.

5 - Prepare for your day with God. Go to bed early and sleep until rested. A rested body supports coming present to God and hearing him well.

6 - Unless sleep has been disturbed, we awake in solitude and silence and want to remain there. Sleep gives welcome relief from busyness and noise.

7 - We pre-select a place to spend our day that is sheltered from intrusions. Ideally we can awake and move to this location without interruptions.

8 - We prepare this space. It is important that we enjoy being there. An extra cup of coffee or a snack for later on might be helpful.

9 - We may choose to spend all or part of our day in nature. Solitude and nature go well together. Nature is restful—it is not rebelling against its Creator.

10 - Two movements of the soul take place in solitude. The soul:

- abstains from what is toxic, and
- engages with what restores.

11 - We begin our time in solitude with abstinence. The soul must first be emptied, cleansed. The time will come for engagement, receiving, filling.

12 - We fast from phone/email/internet. If we are checking messages, our soul is no longer in solitude. But during engagement, worship music can be enriching.

13 - We don't bring work with us. If we are working on our "to do" list, our soul is no longer in solitude. This time is my gift to God—and to myself!

14 - We practice doing nothing—itself a major discipline or achievement. Many find the very idea challenging, so deeply has busyness shaped us.

15 - As I enter more deeply into rest, I grow in my awareness of the condition of my soul. Practice expands my ability to go deeper into silence.

16 - Abstinence gradually prepares me for engagement—for receiving. The time may come to undertake other spiritual practices such as study.

17 - An area of personal need may have been clarified for me. I may want to seek the Lord in other practices like meditation, prayer, study, journaling.

18 - Solitude and healing are closely related. In solitude I gain insight into my brokenness, but I also experience the power of my Father's unconditional love.

19 - We ask the Spirit to guide. We rely on him. There is no right or wrong way to "do" solitude. We are just "hanging out" with our Father. He teaches us.

20 - We consider what rhythm we want solitude and silence to have in our lives:

- a daily practice?
- weekly?
- monthly?
- annually?

We make plans.

21 - What is impossible to do today, or later this week, becomes easily doable by planning ahead. I take responsibility, schedule and make arrangements.

22 - Solitude and silence comfort the lonely. Some fear solitude will increase loneliness. But in the silences of God, I experience that I am never alone.

23 - And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. (Mark 1:35)