

*1 Kings 19:11-12 NLT - 11 "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper.*

### Ideas for Getting Started

- start in short bursts of 5, 10, 20 minutes
- know yourself (personality, life stage, stage of discipleship) give yourself grace where needed
- embrace the uneventful times of just silence
- reframe distractions as “opportunities for prayer and soul work

### WRAP-UP

We may need to battle the rhythms and practices of our culture to follow Jesus’ example of silence and solitude. We find that it was a frequent part of his life, to get away alone with God and pray. It can help us receive from God when we need his guidance, his strength and his comfort. It is a gift of undistracted time in the Father’s presence, allowing Him to do the good, sometimes difficult work, of shaping us to be more like Jesus.

### Memory Verse

*But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.*

*-Luke 5:16 NLT*

### PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members’ needs: \_\_\_\_\_

*Challenge- Try one of these as a way to enter a time of silence with God: journaling, slowly reading/reflecting on a Psalm, breath prayers which are brief prayers repeated in a single breath. (e.g. “I trust, you lord”, “more of you, less of me”.)*

## “Silence and Solitude” Rhythms and Revival #3

### INTRODUCTION

In our current sermon series, we are examining the rhythms of our lives that lead to a deeper relationship with God. Last week we learned the importance of observing a sabbath by ceasing from our work, and drawing near to honor God in our rest, delight and worship of Him. This week we consider a companion practice or observing silence and solitude. It may seem foreign for us to observe times of silence and solitude. It sounds like something practiced by monks in a monastery. In the digital age our attention span has shrunk to nearly non-existent; a mere 8 seconds on average. We are surrounded by intrusions that vey for our attention. Most of us live in a state of perpetual partial attention. Living at this pace robs us of the ability of be fully present with ourselves, with others and with God. But Jesus modeled an unhurried life interwoven with silence and solitude. And as we grow to be more like Him, we will also integrate times of silence and solitude into our own lives.

### Ice Breaker

Set a minute timer. See how close you can come to guessing when one minute is up before it ends. If you are in a group, raise your hand when you think a minute has passed. Did you stop too early or wait too long?

### Key Passage

*Luke 5:15-16 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. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.*

### STUDY QUESTIONS

#### 1. Solitude (Eremos) in Jesus’ Life

In Luke 5:16 we see that Jesus often withdrew to pray. The New Living Translation uses the word “wilderness” to describe where He went. In

the Greek it is the word *erēmos* and refers to a place that is solitary, lonely, desolate, or uninhabited. This was His regular practice. Let's consider some occasions during which Jesus sought solitude.

*Matthew 4:1-2 NLT - 1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil. 2 For forty days and forty nights he fasted and became very hungry.*

Immediately after Jesus was baptized, we find Him led by the Spirit into the wilderness. His time in solitude was God-led. It had a purpose. In this case, it was for him to face the enemy and be tested.

*In addition to solitude and prayer Jesus fasted. How is fasting similar to silence and solitude in helping us hear from God?*

*Luke 5:15-16 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. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.*

In our key verse we see that vast crowds were coming to hear Jesus preach and to be healed. Jesus could have responded by increasing His public appearances, and “amping up” the schedule to heal more and preach to more. But verse 16 seems to indicate that in response to the increased demand, Jesus withdrew often to a place of solitude and prayer.

*What are your personal indicators that the demands on you have depleted you physically, emotionally or spiritually? What are the barriers to your taking a time of silence and solitude to replenish your energy?*

*Luke 6:12-13a NLT - 12 One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. 13 At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles. ...*

In chapter 6 of Luke, Jesus spends all night alone on the mountain, and as soon as the day dawns he chose the apostles. It seems that his

time of solitude and prayer was spent seeking God's direction for a significant decision.

*What are the significant decisions that you are currently facing? Have you spent time alone with God listening for His direction?*

*Matthew 14:10-13 NLT - 10 So John was beheaded in the prison, 11 and his head was brought on a tray and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. 12 Later, John's disciples came for his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus what had happened. 13 As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left in a boat to a remote area to be alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns.*

John the Baptist played many roles in Jesus' life. He was a co-laborer in the faith, a forerunner who announced Him as Messiah, and he was family (his cousin). John suffered a horrible fate, and as soon as Jesus heard about it, He withdrew to be alone.

*Many of us have suffered loss in the past year; loss of friends, family, business, security, and any number of other things that the pandemic has stripped from us. But not all of us have taken time to process the grief we feel. If you were to withdraw to a solitary place to grieve, what would you be grieving the loss of?*

## **2. How to Follow Jesus in Silence and Solitude**

We see from the practices of Jesus that the purpose of solitude is not to merely be isolated from other people, but to get away with God for a purpose, and that purpose is to give God unencumbered access to us, to be fully present and open before Him. Some of us naturally recharge in times of silence (introverts), others draw their energy from connecting with those around them (extroverts).

*What is your natural tendency towards silence and solitude, does it feel a welcomed or unwelcomed idea?*

We need to check our expectations as we practice solitude. This is not something to be done out of obligation, but rather it is the gift of time with God. These are the moments in which God can refine your soul but we need to listen for His gentle whisper as Elijah did.