

THE PRACTICE OF SOLITUDE

Solitude is primarily about NOT doing something. Just as fasting means to refrain from eating so solitude means to refrain from society. When we go into solitude, we withdraw from conversation, from the presence of others, from noise, from the constant barrage of stimulation.

Solitude requires relentless perseverance. Schedule it on your calendar; otherwise it is likely not to happen.

One of the great obstacles to extended solitude is that frequently it may feel like a waste of time. This may happen because we are conditioned to feel that our existence is justified only when we are doing something.

You may be ready to try spending an extended period of time alone with God – perhaps a day. The first attempt at extended solitude can feel intimidating so some structure such as described in Glandion Carney's book, *The Spiritual Formation Toolkit* might be helpful.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR A TIME OF SOLITUDE

1. Find a place where you can be uninterrupted and alone, such as a park or a retreat center.
2. Spend a brief time the night before to get ready, to ask God to bless the day, and to tell Him you want to devote the day to Him. This is your gift to God, but even more, it is a gift God wants to give you. What do you need from the Lord: a sense of healing and forgiveness? Conviction for an apathetic heart? Compassion? A renewed sense of mission? Ask Him for this.
3. Arrange the day around listening to God.

8:00-9:00	Prepare your mind and heart, take a walk, or do whatever will help you set aside concerns over tasks and responsibilities. Try to arrange your morning so you can remain in silence from the time you awaken.
9:00-11:00	Read and meditate on Scripture, taking time to stop to reflect when God seems to be speaking to you through the text.
11:00-12:00	Write down responses to what you have read. Speak to God about them.
12:00-1:00	Eat lunch and take a walk, reflecting on the morning.
1:00-2:00	Take a nap.
2:00-3:00	Set goals that emerge from the day's reflection.
3:00-4:00	Write down these goals and other thoughts in a journal. You may want to do this in the form of a letter to God. Prepare to reenter society.