

More on Solitude

So Jesus *withdrew*, which is to say, he stayed in solitude for some time (Luke 5:16). How much time? There was a time, a long while ago, when I used to run long distance. It's important to gain endurance for the race, so we'd run long distances to train. But it was also important to work on your speed. To do that, we would often run a series of sprints in quick succession. The idea in all of this was to train a little at a time, and as you got into better shape you could run further and faster. At the very beginning, we might go for 15 minutes of solitude and slowly build on that. It's important here that if we should miss a day not to get discouraged or give up; just start it over again the next day. Don't become legalistic about it, but let it be about growing in the grace of Jesus.

Throughout the day we are given natural opportunities for solitude. Take advantage of them. Perhaps we have to drive to work. Every notice how you can get lost in thought while you're driving, so that all of a sudden you get to your destination? Scary, isn't it? How about the next time you drive you don't turn on the radio, but instead be conscious of the fact that you are not alone, but that God is with you? Meet with him there on the road. Perhaps one of our tasks is doing the laundry. It doesn't take much concentration to fold. Use that time to become aware that God is with you, and let his light shine in your hearts, his light that tells you how much he loves you, his light that tells of his approval. One of the best times for solitude is during the night. What do you do when you wake up and "can't sleep"? Whatever the reason may be, consider that God is calling you to spend uninterrupted, quiet time with him.

**On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night (Ps 63:6).**

Find a place in your home, or maybe in your office, that you use only as your "quiet place" where you place your Bible, a journal, a pen. Write in your day timer that at this and that time, you have a regularly scheduled appointment to be with God and to pay attention to him. Turn off the phone if need be, or ignore it if it rings. If you have young children, let them know that Mommy is now going to spend some time with God, and that they shouldn't disturb her unless it's very important. And while you're alone with God, bring those children to the Lord and ask him to care for them. Read through books in the Bible, and use the Bible alone, or a short devotional to get you into the mode of being together with you and your God. But don't just read and then close the Bible. Look at the words that especially jump out at you. They jump out because the Holy Spirit is making them come alive for you for this day, at this moment.

One more suggestion: schedule a few times this year to spend three or four hours alone with God. Go to the ocean. Go climb a mountain. Go to a retreat centre. Do this with the purpose of asking yourself a simple question: am I doing what God wants me to? Am I being overrun by the demands of others, and not spending enough time with my God? Someone has said that goals for life are not created, but

discovered when you take the time to be alone with God; let God set our goals, let God show us new alternatives for the future.