

## *Training in Solitude*

If there was anyone who was busy in this life, it was Jesus. He was getting more and more popular, a house-hold name, and well known teacher and healer. It seems the more he tried to keep his reputation quiet, the more people spread the word that he was a worthwhile Person to see and here.

**But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed** [Luke 5:16].

The word *often* there is not an exaggeration.

**Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert... for forty days** [4:1].

**One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God** [6:12].

**Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"** [9:18]

**About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto the mountain to pray... The next day when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him** [9:28, 37].

And so on. It has been called training through solitude. What is solitude? It is getting away by yourself to be alone with God. It's been pointed out that this discipline is probably the most important of all.

You will notice from those verses that solitude does not necessarily mean being physically alone by yourself. For example in Luke 9 we find Jesus praying in private, yet his disciples are with him. So Richard J. Foster points out: "Solitude is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place." The point of this training is not simply to be alone. The point is that through this we meet with the true and living God. Before I get into some practical notions here, I want to entice you all to engage in this kind of training. What's so great about solitude?

We catch a glimpse as to it's importance when we look at the first reference in Luke about Jesus going off alone. Listen to what is written.

**At daybreak Jesus went to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them...** [Luke 4:42].

Solitude forces us to ask this very important question.

**Who sets the agenda of our lives? OR  
Who manages our lives?**

Is it people that set our agenda? Is it appointments? Is it schedules? Jesus discovered what life is like as a human being, and he found out that people had their own agendas for him. Note how Luke describes it: *they tried to keep him from leaving*

*them.*

I know for myself that I have the tendency to want to please other people. So I will do whatever they want. The question is, is what people want the very same thing that God wants? Jesus was able to fend off their demands for attention because he spent time with God. He wanted God to set his agenda. He wanted God to manage his life here on earth. Hannah Whitall Smith writes: "You must hand yourself and all your inward experiences, your temptations, your temperament, your frames and feelings, all over into the care and keeping of your God, and leave them there. He made you, and therefore He understands you and knows how to manage you, and you must trust Him to do it. Say to Him, 'Here, Lord, I abandon myself to you. I have tried in every way I could think of to manage myself, and to make myself what I know I ought to be, but have always failed. Now I give it up to you. Do take entire possession of me. Work in me all the good pleasure of your will. Mold and fashion me into such a vessel as seems good to you. I leave myself in your hands, and I believe you will, according to your promise, make me into a vessel unto your honor, sanctified, and prepared for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work.'"