

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES # 2

“THE LORD IS IN HIS HOLY TEMPLE; LET ALL THE EARTH KEEP SILENCE BEFORE HIM.” (Habakkuk 2:20)

Last week we learned that through the Spiritual Disciplines WE MEET WITH JESUS AND LEARN TO BE MORE LIKE JESUS.

Read and discuss these passages as a group. What do they tell us about the prayer life of Jesus?

Mark 1:35 -- *“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”*

Luke 5:15-16 -- *“The news about Jesus spread more and more, and large crowds would come together to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. Yet he often withdrew to deserted places and prayed.”*

Matthew 6:6 – *Jesus said: “When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”*

Some prayers are offered in public and prayed with other people. We often pray in church, in our Home Groups and with family and friends. It is appropriate to do so. (See for instance Acts 1:14 and Acts 12:12).

What are some of the usual **purposes** of prayers prayed *in a group* or with other people? For instance, prayers prayed in a church service, your Home Group or with family and friends?

What are some **blessings** that come from these “group” prayers?

Do you personally spend more prayer time praying with others or in “quiet time” prayer? Why is that?

Jesus teaches us it is also important to pray in solitude and silence. Even in a noisy world we can sanctify places as our *“prayer closets”* for *“secret” time* with God. People sometimes call this their *“quiet time”* with God. (Matthew 6:6).

Brainstorm: What are some reasons that Jesus regularly sought out “solitary” and “deserted” places for prayer time? Why was that time important to Jesus?

In what ways are the prayers we pray in private places of solitude and silence *different from* prayers prayed in public and with other people?

What are some *blessings* you have received by spending such quiet time with Jesus?

Let’s talk about some of the **real world challenges** to actually doing this.

WE LIVE IN A NOISY, BUSY WORLD. What are some of the noisy and demanding things in your life that are hard to escape?

Discuss “noise” that is *imposed on us* by our busy and modern lives. Think, for instance, of traffic noise, jet planes, phones ringing, house rattling bass music blaring from passing cars, sirens sounding; you might even add some good and necessary noise such as babies crying and children demanding attention, etc.).

Think also of the noise that we *voluntarily invite into* our lives. Consider both “audible” noise and “visual” noise, such as our own TVs, radios, cell phones, and electronic devices for work and entertainment purposes.

Does the phrase “sensory overload” apply to your life? What are the dangers of such sensory overload?

Consider this carefully: Why do we voluntarily invite so much noise into our lives? How does the Devil use the world’s “noise” to distract you from a relationship with God?

Do you have any place and time in your life that is truly “quiet” and “solitary”? How does Jesus use quiet places and quiet times to draw us deeper into relationship with God?

Before we close this study, we recognize that some of us may have *too much quiet and solitude*. We know people who live lonely lives they did not choose. We must remember that Jesus *visited* lonely places for prayer time with God – but he lived his daily life interacting with people and responding to their noisy needs. “Solitary confinement” in prison is a punishment! We need balance between our “people time” and our “quiet time.” We need to open up space in our lives for people who live lonely lives and need more human companionship.

MAKE IT REAL: Explore with your group how much quiet time is needed for a healthy and deepening relationship with God. How much quiet time do you personally need? Is this a daily need or less frequent?

What are some big challenges you must overcome to schedule meaningful quiet time with God?

Acknowledge the noise you voluntarily bring into your life – can you sacrifice some of that self-imposed noise for quiet time with God? What will you do? *Make a personal commitment!*

Deal also with the noise that others impose on your life. Do you need help from your spouse, children and/or friends to achieve some quiet time with God? Should you agree with family and friends that you will not be interrupted (don’t call me, text me, interrupt me except in true emergency situations) at a certain time of day or when you are in your designated “prayer closet”? *Make a compact with others!*

DO IT! Take 5-10 minutes at the end of Home Group time for truly silent and contemplative prayer. Turn off all the cell phones and noise makers in the house and pray quietly together, but in silence. Designate someone to pray a short “closing prayer” out loud when the closing time comes.

LISTEN! Be open to the possibility that God may disclose something to you in this prayer time. If you receive a new insight or blessing, feel free to share with your group before you close the meeting.