

The Significance of Solitude

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[0:00] Thank you.

Thank you.

I've mentioned now for several weeks, we're starting a brand new series called Good Intention. Good Intention. As you kind of saw in that video, we're often pulled in a lot of different directions in life and oftentimes to certain extremes.

And that's not only true in like our regular daily life, but our spiritual life as well. I mean, just as an example, we're kind of self-professed Bible nerds here at Faith Family, right?

Okay, four of you. I'm trying to convert more of you. And what I mean by Bible nerds is we love to study the Bible. We want to know the context. We want to, you know, not just kind of glean a little lesson.

[1:43] We want to know what this book is ultimately about and how it reveals Jesus to us. Amen? And the danger with being a Bible nerd, like myself, is that we can be all learning and no applying, right?

Like we're just so consumed. We want knowledge and we want information, all of which is really important. But the goal of learning isn't just to get information, obviously, it's to do something with that.

Amen? And so that's just one example of kind of the extremes that we get pulled into. Like we just want to know and we forget to do or all about application and less about content.

And so that's really what this series is ultimately about. It's learning to be good in these tensions of learning how to have a healthy balance.

Again, kind of the big idea of this series, which I've mentioned before, is that a healthy Christian life learns to be good in tension. We're not running to one extreme or another, but walking that sense of a balanced Christian life.

[2:51] And I'm going to say more about that as we dive into the message and kind of set up the series for these next several weeks. So let's dive in to Luke chapter 5 here, beginning in verse 12.

And we'll look at several different passages this evening, but we'll begin here. So I invite you, if you would, to please stand, if you're able to do so, as we honor the reading of God's Word.

Luke chapter 5, beginning in verse 12. Now, while he was in one of the cities, there was a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and he begged him, Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.

And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.

Now, when even more the report about him went abroad, the great crowds gathered to hear him to be healed of their infirmities. But he withdrew, or he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

[4:02] Let's pray together. Father, thanks for this time to be in your Word. I realize, Lord, you've brought us here for a purpose. And there's a reason everybody's here.

There's something that you want to say to us. And I pray that you would come by your Spirit and talk to us, speak to us from your Word. You want us to be balanced, to be good in these tensions, and to walk faithfully as Jesus did.

And so help us see that tonight as we look to your Word. I pray it in Jesus' name and God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. Life is on the wire.

Have you ever heard that expression? Life is on the wire. It's actually a phrase that was made famous by a man by the name of Carl Papa Wallingde.

Carl was a legendary high wire artist who was very famous for performing terrifying stunts without a safety net.

[5:06] He once walked the tightrope across Veterans Stadium at a Phillies baseball game. He did the same thing near Tower Bridge in London.

He also did it at the Rubber Bowl in 1973 for a football game. In addition to doing these stunts, he also founded a group known as the Flying Wallandas.

They were actually a group of his family members who would frequently perform at the Barnum and Bailey Circus. Carl was also the great grandfather of a man by the name of Nick Wallanda.

Now, Nick became famous back in 2012 when he walked across a two-inch steel cable with nothing but him and the thunderous water of Niagara Falls below.

Isn't that insane? It's because it is, right? And millions of people across the world watched, held their breath as Nick slowly walked across the cable, making hundreds of little adjustments along the way.

[6:20] Every gust of wind made another correction. Every movement or wobble of the cable required a quick reaction. And finally, Nick made it to the end.

Now, if there is one thing that the Wallanda family knows is very, very important in life, what do you think that might be? That's right.

One word. Balance. Balance. It was actually the title of Nick's book. And that is at least in part what his great grandfather meant when he coined that phrase, life is on the wire.

What he meant was that whether it's work and family or faith and artistry or your physical life and your spiritual life, one of the keys to life is balance.

It's balance. In fact, that was the very thing that led to Carl's tragic death. In 1978, he was performing a high wire walk across two hotels in Puerto Rico.

[7:32] A gust of wind caused him to lose his balance and he fell to his death. Balance.

Balance. We all know the importance of it, right? And of course, not just with extreme examples like walking across a wire over Niagara Falls, but I would submit to you that we know that even in everyday life, balance matters.

How many of you have ever stood up real quick, gotten dizzy, and lost your sense of balance?

Anybody? Yeah, absolutely. How many of you have ever built something that when you got finished didn't balance?

Okay. Confession time, right? How many of you have ever driven a car that wasn't in proper balance? How many of you have ever looked at your schedule and realized it was not in balance? Okay. Maybe my time for confession. How many of you have ever had a bank account that didn't balance? Now I'm going to get all of you. How many of your diet isn't balanced?

[8:39] I actually came across a story about the early frontier hunters who were often stranded in the wilderness for days. And the only thing they had to eat, now granted they had lots of it, was rabbit.

And they would just eat every day for weeks, would eat rabbit. And what eventually happened is they became weak and their muscles started to waste away.

This is really interesting, I thought. They died of starvation. You say, how do you die of starvation when your stomach is full? It's because rabbit meat, while great protein, has no fat in it at all.

And the human body is not designed to survive on one nutrient alone. In other words, the explorers were not dying because they didn't have enough food.

They were dying because they ate too much of one kind of food. Their diet was not balanced. You see, faith family, whether or not you're walking the tightropes across Niagara Falls, or whether you're living your everyday life, balance matters.

[9:54] And what I want to submit to you over these next few weeks is that the exact same thing is true in the Christian life. Here are just a few examples that we're going to explore. Like the balance between community, we're all called to be with people, amen?

And also solitude, that is to spend time with God. We are to give, but not just give, we're also to receive. We're to work, but we're also to rest.

And some people work all the time and never rest. And some of y'all rest all the time and never work, right? And you need to get off your hind end and do something, right? Fasting and feasting.

This is a big one. Like we just pray, pray, pray, Lord just send it down from the sky. And we don't ever actually do anything. And yet praying and doing has to be held in balance.

Serving and being served. Learning and also applying. Is everybody with me? Like these are things we have to learn to be balanced in.

[11:00] And these are just a few topics that we're going to look at over the next few weeks. And what I'm going to try to do now, every week, I'm not going to be able to focus on both extremes.

What I will do sometimes, like tonight, is I'm going to focus on the one I think we're likely most imbalanced in. The one that we need to cultivate more in our life so that we will be balanced. And so let's be honest, most of us, if we looked at our schedule, if we looked at our everyday life, we're with people a lot. Right?

Most of us are with people quite a bit throughout our day. Family relationships. So you spend time with your family. Many of you will spend time throughout your week hanging out with friends. You have relationships here at church and you're in community here. You may be in a dating or marriage or whatever relationship where you have a relationship and community there.

[12:02] Some of you may chat with people and talk online. Now, we could debate how much of that is true community, but that's not the point of tonight's message. My point is to say this.

Most of you spend a lot of time with people. Some of you might even say too much time with certain people. Right? But we spend a lot of our time with people.

And what I would submit, both in my experience as well as my experience as a pastor talking to people, is what we don't practice a lot of, where we're imbalanced, is biblical solitude.

Biblical solitude. Now, biblical solitude is not being a loner or an introvert or hating people. Bible says you're not supposed to hate people, right?

Even though that can be easy to do. Here's what biblical solitude is, if you want a definition. Biblical solitude is the intentional, intentional practice of temporarily withdrawing from the demands and distractions of daily life to commune with God, pray, and recharge spiritually.

[13:12] I'm going to read this again. Biblical solitude is the intentional practice of temporarily withdrawing from the demands and distractions of daily life to commune with God, pray, and recharge spiritually.

Has everybody got that? And this balance, listen, are you with me? This balance of being with people, but also being with God, is something, shocker, Jesus perfectly modeled for us. Perfectly. Jesus' life lived good in the tension between being with people and being with the Father. I mean, think about it. Jesus was around people all the time.

He's always around the disciples. There's crowds following Him everywhere. He's dealing with the religious leaders. Like everywhere He went, He was dealing with people.

And yet He made it an intentional practice in His life to balance His time with people with His time with the Father. And Luke, probably more than any other gospel writer, highlights this in the life of Jesus.

[14:28] It's mentioned in other gospels, but primarily Luke. Let's look at the example we began with here in Luke 5, verse 12. It says, So, what's happening in Luke 15 is that Jesus is that Jesus is going to be able to do this.

And when the leper saw Jesus, he fell on his face and he begged Him, Lord, if You will, You can make me clean. And Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, I will be clean.

And immediately the leprosy left Him. He charged Him to tell no one, but go show yourself to the priest. Make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded for a proof to them.

So, what's happening in Luke 15 is that Jesus, and this happens multiple times in the gospels, He encounters a leper. He encounters someone with leprosy. And what does Jesus do?

He heals him. Now, why does Jesus heal him of the leprosy? I've actually taught, we did a whole series quite a few years ago on the miracles of Jesus. And what the miracles of Jesus are doing is not showing us that He's God, even though He is.

[15:30] It's showing us that He's the true Adam. That is, Jesus has authority over the created order. Just as human beings in the very beginning were created with sovereignty and authority over the creation, Jesus, as the true Adam, the ultimate human, has the ability to make things right.

To demonstrate that authority over creation. So that's what He's doing here. And what do you think happens as a result of Jesus healing this man of leprosy?

You don't need a degree to figure this out. If there was a doctor, if there was a doctor in Burnsville, that if you made an appointment with him, he could take any disease you have away, any sickness that you're dealing with, he could heal it.

How busy do you think that doctor would be? Right? I mean, like there would never, this is bad English, there would never not be a line out the door.

Amen? Everybody would be coming to see him, which is exactly what happened. Verse 15. But now even more, the report about him went abroad. And say it, great crowds gathered to hear him and be healed of their infirmities.

[16 : 43] So what you would expect to happen actually happened. And so, like, if you think you're in demand because you're a business owner, because you're a pastor, because you're a parent with children, you're a supervisor at Costco, or whatever.

Like, you think, pastor, you have no idea how in demand I am. Imagine the demands on Jesus. Amen? In fact, look at another example of this in Mark chapter 1.

In Mark chapter 1, it says, That evening at sundown, so we're into the night, they bring to him those that were sick and oppressed by demons, and the what?

The whole city is gathered at the door, and he healed many that were sick and various diseases. He cast out many demons. A leper came to him and pouring to him and kneeling and said, If you will, you can make me clean.

And moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, I will be clean. And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly commanded him and sent him away at once, and said to him, See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest.

[17 : 57] Offer your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them. But he went out, and he began to talk freely about it, and he spread the news. And watch, Jesus could no longer openly enter a town.

He couldn't go anywhere. I mean, people were bothering, not bothering, but they were like messing, like following him around everywhere. He can't go anywhere. He goes to desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

Do you see what's happening here? Jesus is up late. He's dealing with entire towns that are gathered at his doorstep. He's dealing with spiritual warfare.

Like, sometimes I think we picture Jesus just effortlessly casting out demons. You know, demons out, demons out, no big deal. This is a piece of cake. Like, spiritual warfare is exhausting.

Thank you for a few amens, right? Like, listen, like when I get done preaching three weekend sermons, this is what I look like on Sunday afternoon. It's like I'm exhausted, right?

[19 : 06] And so Jesus here is extremely busy. The demands are enormous on his life. He's engaging in spiritual warfare all the time. And yet, in all of this, look at what Jesus takes time to do.

This is so important. But he would withdraw to a desolate place and pray. That's Luke's account. Now look at Mark's account. In other words, what I want you to see, and I'm going to show you multiple examples of this, is that when Jesus was dealing with the busyness of crowds, and his schedule was absolutely full of appointments, and there were always issues to address and needs to meet.

Are you with me? The number one priority when he woke up in the morning was not checking Twitter or email.

Or watching Fox News. I just figured I'd get some of you there, right? What was his number one priority after spending all day dealing with people to spend time with the Father?

[20 : 42] To go to a desolate place and practice solitude. And this wasn't just something Jesus did when he was dealing with a busy schedule and lots of crowds.

If you jump to chapter 6, Luke is going to give you another example of this. Look at chapter 6, verse 6. On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there who had a right hand that was withered.

And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so they might find a reason to accuse him. But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, come and stand here.

And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or do harm, to save life or to destroy it? And after looking around at them, he said to them, stretch out your hand.

And he did so. And his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury, and they discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus. So what's the context here?

[21:41] The context here is now Jesus is dealing with conflict. In Luke 6, Jesus is in controversy with the Jewish leaders. Shocker, right?

Like that was like every day of his life almost. And leave it to church people to cause the most drama. I figured I'd get at least a couple of amens, right?

In fact, what Luke gives you here in Luke chapter 6 is back-to-back stories of Jesus breaking the Sabbath, at least going against what the Pharisees thought breaking the Sabbath would be.

And man, the religious leaders are so ticked at Jesus. They're really, really mad. And they're trying to put together a plan to see how they can get rid of him. And so here's the two things I want you to put together.

Notice it on the screen. That Jesus not only dealt with a lot of crowds, he also dealt with a lot of conflict. I'm just curious if there's anybody here who has someone in their life that doesn't like you.

[22:49] Nobody. Okay? Then you should try being a pastor. All right? So I assure you. All right? So you know what I'm saying? Like you've been in conflict situations many times.

And you have issues at work and issues in your family and all kinds of relational conflict. And it may not rise to the level of a death threat like it did with Jesus.

But you may have somebody in your life that wants to fire you or humiliate you or take revenge on you or hurt you in some way. And I want to ask you, like, what do you do in those moments? Like, what do you do with that?

Some of you turn into this. You turn into a shark. And you want to see bloodshed. And your emotions run out of control and you just want to destroy and divide and harm.

Others of you don't do that. You do this. What conflict? Right? I don't even know what conflict we're talking about. And you just kind of shut down and you just suppress your own issues.

[23:48] And I want to just say, but how did Jesus deal with this conflict? Did he seek to destroy? Or did he just, like, bottle it in? What did Jesus do?

And I don't mean in, like, the WWJD bracelet type. But, like, I mean, like, what does the text reveal that Jesus did when he knew that he had the target on his back? When the Pharisees were after him?

It won't shock you, right? It's kind of the theme of the message. Look at chapter 6, verse 12. In these days he went out to the mountain to pray. And, everybody say it with me, all night he continued in prayer to God.

In other words, Jesus here spent the whole night praying when he was in the midst of conflict with the religious leaders. I want to say this to you, and I hope you'll receive it.

You can find calm in your conflict through solitude with your Creator. You can find peace with your soul.

[24:53] In fact, let me say it this way. If you have conflict in your life, then spend time with the Prince of Peace. Because there actually is someone, if you would spend time with Him, could bring calm, a holy calm, into the midst of your conflicted heart.

That's what Jesus did. Jesus sought time with the Father in the midst of His conflict. Now, notice what happens right after this in verse 13. And when day came, He called His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He named the apostles.

So, the next thing we see is we're going to find that Jesus practiced solitude right before He made major decisions, major choices. Jesus comes out of the time with the solitude with the Father. And Luke tells us that right after that, He appoints the disciples, which will be an extension of His ministry. This is really fascinating for me. Paul, who calls Jesus our wisdom, is actually seeking wisdom.

Jesus is actually doing the very thing the Bible calls us and commands us to do. Look at James 1, verse 5. If any one of you lacks wisdom, let him what?

[26:11] Ask God. Who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given to Him. What did Jesus teach His followers in Matthew 6, 33?

Seek first. First. Let your first priority. Be to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Is there anybody... Don't answer out loud. Is there anybody here that's about to make a major decision in life? Maybe it's to get married. Maybe it's to start a family. Maybe you're considering retirement.

Maybe you want to sell a business. Maybe you're considering taking a new job. Maybe you're trying to figure out what college you're going to go to. Listen. Notice this on the screen. We tend to seek advice from our community rather than wisdom from Christ.

And why? Why? Because we're not good intention. That is, we're not balanced in life when it comes to spending time with people and also spending time with God.

[27 : 19] Hudson Taylor, who's a very well-known missionary in church history. He was a missionary to China. He returned once to England. He was absolutely exhausted with ministry.

He was considering starting a brand new work in the interior part of China. Most of the ministry to that point was kind of out in the coastal areas.

And so he was considering starting a new work, but he was really burdened by it. He didn't have enough people, didn't have enough money. He knew there were a lot of dangers doing this. And so he comes back to England and he's just really struggling with whether or not to do this, to take this step, to make this decision.

And so on one particular Sunday when everybody else was like hanging out with friends, he decides to go for a walk on the beach. He just spends some time alone with God.

And this is what he writes was revealed to him as he was practicing that moment of solitude. Quote, If we are obeying the Lord, the responsibility rest with Him, not with us.

[28 : 27] Thou, Lord, Thou shalt have all the burden. At Thy bidding, as Thy servant, I go forward, leaving the results with Thee.

Listen to what he says. How restfully I turned away from the sands. The conflict ended. All was at peace.

I felt as if I could fly up the hill to Mr. Pierce's house. And oh, how I did sleep that night. Why?

Because he spent time with God and gave the heaviness of the burden of that decision to the Lord.

Listen, faith family, here it is. If you need wisdom, make frequent appointments with the wonderful counselor. If you're going through conflict, you have the prince of peace.

[29 : 28] If you need wisdom, you have a wonderful counselor. But you need to be good in the tension of not just spending time with people, but spending time with God.

Let's look at another one. Chapter 9. Are we doing okay? Everybody still with me? Okay. Chapter 9, verse 18. We only have a couple hours left, but we're getting there. Chapter 9, verse 18. Now it happened that as he was praying alone, this is really important, the disciples were with him and he asked them, what did the crowd say or who did the crowd say that I am?

Here's what's really interesting here, and it's going to sound like a contradiction, but Jesus even sought solitude for deeper community. Deeper community. And the reason why I know it sounds like a contradiction because aren't you saying we're supposed to get away from people rather than be with them?

But this gives an added layer to Jesus' practice of solitude. Luke chapter 9, this event where he breaks away and withdraws and practices solitude comes right after the feeding of the 5,000.

This event where he's dealing with the crowds and people are misunderstanding his identity. And so he breaks away, but he doesn't just break away alone.

[30 : 43] He does spend time alone, but he has his disciples with him. And it's actually, this is so important, please don't zone out, right? That it's in this moment of solitude that Jesus not only talks to his disciples about who he is, that he's the very Son of God, but he also reveals to them what he came to do.

He shares with them that he's going to be crucified and he's going to be raised. And so he has this very intimate, personal, revealing conversation with the disciples in a time of solitude.

In other words, notice this on the screen. I think this is huge. This really important conversation happened after a night of meditation.

This really important conversation happened after a time of meditation. Do you see the pattern in Jesus' life? In other words, not only do you need time to break away in solitude, you may also at times need to take your spouse with you, or a friend with you, or your staff, so that you can have those really important conversations about the things that matter in life.

Are you all with me tonight? Like, you're not yawning on me, are you? Right? Like, this is really important. And some of you in your very key, close relationships relationships are not able to have that kind of conversation because you're too busy.

[32:20] You're dealing with so many other things and you need to break away. You need to break away to be alone with the Lord. And in those moments, have the kind of important conversations you need to have.

Let me give you just one more. I think I've already established the pattern of this in Jesus' life, but I'll give you just one more because I think it'll be helpful for some of you. Look in Matthew's Gospel. This is Matthew 14, verse 13.

Now, when Jesus, what? Heard this. What did He do? He withdrew. From there in a boat to a desolate place, a place where no one else is, by Himself.

Now, what I want to show you here is that Jesus is now practicing solitude in the midst of personal crisis, personal grieving. Because what's the context here?

When you read in that verse, when Jesus heard this, what should you ask? Heard what? That's right. What's the this? What did Jesus hear that caused Him to withdraw, to go to a desolate place by Himself?

[33:25] Well, let's read the rest of the passage. This was right before it. When Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod so that He promised with an oath to give her whatever she would ask.

Prompted by her mother, she said, Give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter. And the king was sorry because of this oath and his guests commanded it to be given. He sent and had John beheaded in prison.

His head was brought on a platter, given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. So that's what happened. This is the death of John the Baptist. And His disciples came and took the body and buried it.

And they went and told Jesus. So what did Jesus hear? He heard about the death of someone really close to Him.

Someone that He really cared about. So what caused Jesus to go into a time of solitude? Answer, His heart is grieving over the loss of this loved one.

[34:30] I mean, you remember Jesus' response when He heard of, both when He heard, but when He got to Lazarus' death. What did Jesus do? What was His response? He wept.

He grieved. Listen, there are some of you here that have recently experienced the loss of a loved one in your life. Or maybe it's the loss of a job.

Or maybe a loss of a child that went off to college. My point is this. There are some of you in this room and you're hurting. You're hurting. You're grieving.

And what I want you to see in the life of Jesus is that in His grief, He spent time with the Father. And so should you.

So should you. Like I've said with other points, let me say it this way. If your heart needs healing, then make frequent appointments with the great physician. Are you starting to see that like most everything you deal with, there's an answer in Jesus?

[35:36] But you have to intentionally break away. You've got to learn, and I've got to learn, to be good intention between being with people and being with God.

Now, I think I've proven the pattern in Jesus' life. Is anybody going to argue me? I mean, I think it's pretty clear in the Gospels. This is not all of them, by the way. But I don't want to go two hours.

This is clearly a pattern. The point is, Jesus lived in proper balance. He lived in proper balance between community and solitude, between people and God.

Now, I want to kind of land the plane by giving you three questions of application for us. The first question is, should I or should we practice solitude? Now, I think that's a pretty dumb question, but I'll ask it anyways.

Because I'm sure there's a person or two that might say, well, but this is Jesus, right? And I'm not Jesus. Sure, Jesus took all this time to spend with the Father, but I'm not Him, and so this doesn't apply to me.

[36:43] Well, I would give you the fact that there are some things Jesus did you can't do. You're right about that. You can't die for people's sins or rise from the dead apart from Jesus, right?

There are clearly things Jesus did no one else could do. This is not one of them. This is actually one of the things that Jesus, listen, Jesus wants His disciples to emulate.

He came to purchase and create a new humanity with certain behaviors and rhythms in life. And this was one of the rhythms that He taught His very followers to do.

You know this. Matthew 6, verse 6. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who's in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And remember, I didn't take the time to read the whole passage, but Jesus says, don't be like the Pharisees who pray on the street corners. Like, break away from all that public and spend private time alone with God.

[37:55] meet Him in the secret places. Are you with me? So you most certainly and I should practice this. Number two is, how should I practice solitude?

How should, or maybe ask it a different way, what is Jesus doing? What am I to be doing when I break away and I have this intentional time with the Lord?

Well, it's interesting. The Bible doesn't give us all the details as to what Jesus did in His time of solitude, but it does give us some hints that are really helpful.

They're really helpful, I think. One of the hints that you'll see if you study this thoroughly in the Gospels is that almost every time or at least frequently when Jesus comes back from solitude, from time with the Father, He quotes Psalms.

I'll just give you one example, which we didn't look at. After the 40 days of solitude, do you remember when Jesus goes out into the wilderness? And when that time of solitude was over, He faced the tempter and what did He quote in those moments?

[39:03] The Psalms. He quoted the Psalms. In other words, I think that gives us at least a little bit of insight into what Jesus is doing. Listen, if you've zoned out, what do you do?

Come on, this is really important and I don't like that much being done. I think Jesus in His time of solitude practiced what Jews were taught, what the Old Testament taught them to do in times of solitude.

And I don't think what Jesus is doing is just reading the Torah or in our case just reading the Bible or just praying. And when I say just, I don't mean like I'm belittling reading the Bible or praying. Of course not. I just think there's more going on there than just break away and see if you can get through the Gospel of Mark. Break away and try to pray for two hours. I think there was more going on here in Jesus' practice of solitude.

And His quoting of the Psalms is a big hint. Because how do the Psalms tell you how to approach the Psalms?

[40:10] Psalm 1 is actually like a prologue. It's an introduction to what you're supposed to do with the Psalms.

So how does the book of Psalms begin and instruct what you're to do with it? Well, look at Psalm 1 verse 1. Blessed is the man, I think this is exactly what Jesus is doing.

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked or stands in the way of sinners or sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law He what?

He meditates day and night. Day and night. And the result of this is He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit and its seasons.

Its leaf does not wither and all that He does He prospers. I believe this is what Jesus is doing here regularly is He's doing what Psalm 1 tells you to do with the Psalms.

[41:11] Now, what does that word meditate mean? That's really key. Hang with me. I'm almost done. That word meditate is the Hebrew word ha-gah.

Say it. Ha-gah. Ha-gah. So we've got to have a little Bible nerd moment, right? Ha-gah. Let's learn a little bit of Hebrew. Ha-gah is the word translated meditate.

The problem is when we think of meditation, we think this. And what I mean by this is like when we think about meditation in our culture, it's like get as much out of your mind as you can.

Are you with me? Like I'm trying to get my mind almost to become a blank slate. Um, like I'm, like get everything out and just kind of get to a state where there's nothing going on in my mind.

That couldn't be further from the opposite of what a Hebrew understanding of meditation is. A Hebrew understanding of medication, of medication, of, that's a whole different topic, of meditation is not getting as much out of your mind as you can, but getting one thing particularly on your mind as much as you can.

[42:25] Namely, the word of God. Right? So, so interesting to understand this word meditate, haggah, is the way it's used elsewhere in the Old Testament.

And the way it's used elsewhere in the Old Testament like an example in Isaiah is a lion haggahs over his prey. A lion haggahs.

You say a lion meditates over his prey? That seems weird. What does it mean to meditate, to haggah over your prey?

Well, it's not like a roar, like a lion's roar. It's like that growl. Maybe the best way is just to kind of let you hear it.

So let me play a clip and I want you to listen closely to the haggah. Oh my God. Oh my God. Oh my God.

[43:37] You hear it? You hear it? Who doesn't love Hebrew? Right?

Did you hear the haggah? Not this big roar. I wish I could do it. What's it doing?

Devouring. Devouring. It's haggahing. It's taking something and going over and over and over and over and over and over.

So what does our time of solitude look like? It doesn't look just how much can you read through and how long can you be in prayer. It's this.

Over and over and over and over day and night devouring the word of God.

[44:43] That's haggah. And that's what Jesus did. It's not just reading your Bible and it's not just praying. It's a kind of prayerful meditation focused on devouring and filling your mind with as much of God's revelation as you can.

And no wonder that would help you in your conflict and in your grief and in your busyness. And that's what Jesus did.

And that's what we need to do. Not only do we need to have solitude and not only is that the practice of solitude here's the final point is why?

Why should we do this? Why should we have this balance in our life? Why should we be good intention? I know you're going to get nervous by three but they're brief.

Three practical reasons why you need to do this. Here's the first one. Focus. Focus. Any of you listen to music when you drive in your car? Okay. Anybody like crank up the music?

[45:54] Come on. Yes, a lot of you do. You crank it up. You crank the music up. And what do you instinctively do when you come to like a busy intersection or traffic or somebody's with you and they want to tell you something?

What do you do? You turn the music down. Because you know that like in that moment you need to focus. Here it is.

Many of us never hear from God because we never take the time to turn the music down. Life is noisy.

Amen? Life is noisy. And you're going to have to turn the music down. The reason why we do this is for focus.

We need to focus on where we are and what's going on. Gene Fleming writes, quote, we live in a noisy, busy world. Silence and solitude seem to fit the era of Victorian lace, high button shoes, and kerosene lamps rather than the age of television, video games, and headphones.

[47:06] We have become a people with an aversion to quiet and uneasiness with being alone.

Turn the music down so you can focus in life. Number two as to why is freedom. Freedom. The problem with being imbalanced in this area and spending most of your time with people and not enough time with God is can we, and I don't even mean this in a bad way, but interacting with people, you're always trying to fit a social conformity.

What should I say to that? How are they going to respond to this? What if they do that? What if they don't like me? You see what I'm saying? And not even in a fake or unauthentic way, it's just all social relationships bring some level of social conformity.

Here's the point, and I'm moving on, is solitude frees you from that. Because do you know who you can be when you're just with God? Who you are.

You don't have to perform. You don't have to do the social dance. You can just be free. And so why should you do this?

[48:27] Because our life needs focus. Because we can experience freedom that comes with just being with God and not having to conform. And then lastly is fulfillment.

This is my last thought, fulfillment. What do I mean by fulfillment? Or what is the act of solitude? The act of solitude is essentially cutting yourself off, right?

It's an act of isolation, of self-denial. And what is that a fulfillment of? Luke chapter 22. Jesus withdrew from them about a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed, saying, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

How did Jesus spend some of his final moments before the cross? He spent them in agonizing solitude. Amen?

[49:36] Agonizing solitude. Like sweating drops of blood. In other words, Jesus' act of solitude was an act of being cut off from everything else.

Why? As preparation for the greater act of being cut off, namely, the cross.

And why did Jesus do that? He did it as an act of love. Jesus himself was cut off so that when you look to him by faith, you would know that you are loved and that you will never be abandoned.

Notice this on the screen. Cutting ourselves off from others to be with God reminds us that Jesus was cut off so we could be with God.

God and that act of solitude is a constant reminder of what Jesus did for us at the cross.

[50:52] So should you do it? Yes, you should. What should you do? How should you practice it? We talked at least about a little bit of that. There's more that you could do. And why should you do it?

For focus, for freedom, and as a constant reminder of the gospel of Jesus in your life. Solitude. Solitude. How are you doing in that area of your Christian walk? Would you say you spend more time with people or more time with God?

And I think if we're honest, we'd say it's more time with people. But as Carl Walling just said, life really is on the wire.

It is a constant battle in life to keep things balanced. And that's not just true with our daily schedules and our personal priorities.

[51:50] It's true when it comes to the things of God. Faith family, we were created for community. But we were also created to be with Christ.

And if we don't learn to be good in that tension, if we don't learn to keep things in proper balance, we too eventually will fall.

And all God's people said, Amen. Would you pray with me? Lord, thank you for the message tonight. Extremely practical for us. Very difficult, I know, to do in a culture that's just so busy and so many things going on and so many things to deal with.

life. But we shouldn't look to our schedule to determine whether or not this should happen. We should look to our Savior, who constantly practiced this, who made it an intentional priority in crisis and conflict when dealing with people and busyness to spend time with the Father, to haggah your word.

So help us tonight. Pursue that by your strength. That your grace would compel us forward to balance.

[53:27] When it comes to time, time with people, and time with the Father. We end this evening by being reminded that Jesus not only was cut off through times of solitude, but ultimately upon the cross.

And it's his work on the cross that enables us to come to you, to be with you, to be in your presence.

So tonight, may we pursue that. Through the act and remembrance, Lord's Supper. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Thank you.