

Distracted - that's one way to describe our noisy culture. God offers a way to turn the volume down and experience peace in his presence. That's what quiet time is about.

Pastor Flint

“Solitude: Less Noise/More Listening”
Luke 2:42

“Quiet Time with God” Video -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRvr_qqA1Sk&list=FLTwmSawvw5w1v2kc1WiXV8w

As part of our preparation for Easter, we looking at spiritual discipline that help us discover that "less is more". Last week looked at confession - a way we experience less guilt and more grace. Today we're talking about solitude, or quiet time with God. It's a way we experience less noise and more listening. Jesus had a pattern of quiet times as we see in Luke's gospel.

⁴² Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. Luke 2:42 NLT

¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer. Luke 5:16 NLT

¹² One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. Luke 6:12 NLT

¹⁸ One day Jesus left the crowds to pray alone. Only his disciples were with him, and he asked them, “Who do people say I am?” Luke 9:18 NLT

²⁸ About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on a mountain to pray. Luke 9:28 NLT

⁴¹ He walked away, about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed. Luke 22:41 NLT

When you hear these verses, what's your reaction?

- **Wow! Jesus really prayed a lot!**
- **Wow! Jesus was so holy! He was so close to God!**
- **Wow! Even though Jesus was the Son of God, and had all power and authority – he took time to spend alone in prayer with his Father.**

Yet, we're going to miss something, if we think these verses are just about Jesus.

- If we read these verses and think, “that’s Jesus – I could never be like that,” we’ve missed it.
- These verses are here not to just impress us about Jesus, although they do.

They are here to show us Jesus’ path for closeness to God.

- They are here as a model.
- In fact, the disciples were so impacted by Jesus’ life of prayer, they were moved to ask, “Teach us to pray”.
- We have the Lord’s prayer, because the disciples were moved to want to be like Jesus – to pray like Jesus.

We need these quiet moments today more than ever!

- We live distracted lives. Our multi-media and multi-sensory world bombards us. Think about all the things constantly vying for our attention.
- The sound of a new text keeps chirping away.
- We get Tweets and Facebook posts.
- If an email is not answered within a few hours, we become impatient or annoyed.
- We expect people to be connected; if we can’t reach them by cell phone, or at least leave a voice mail, we get edgy.

Now, listen closely, here’s the point: In the midst of all this, we need time to “just be”. We need a quiet time and space to just be with God.

- The writer of our Lenten focus, Less is More, talked about his tendency to see life in terms of getting things done. See if you can relate.
- “For years, I didn’t see the point [of quiet times]. Even when I did begin to understand the reasoning behind it, I couldn’t talk myself into it. What’s the benefit? What will I gain? Will it work?”

Then the light went on. “I was assuming a cause and effect relationship with God. I am quiet. You God, speak. I give. God, you reward. If I didn’t get the response I wanted, I would say something like, “That didn’t work” and move on to something else.”

- “Then, one day, my daughter said, Daddy, come and sit with me.” I assumed she wanted me to do something. She just wanted me next to her.
- Aha! So does God. Solitude became God’s invitation to “come and sit with me.” If in the quiet, I heard something from God, I was grateful. But, it was enough to just be together.”

Listen closely: Solitude is about unplugging from distractions, and just sitting with Someone you love.

- For myself, I’ve had a strange teacher about this recently.
- Most of you know about Baylor, our six month old Golden Retriever puppy.

- On October 4th our lives changed forever. Sometimes we're sure it was "a fit of insanity" that led us to get a puppy.
- Baylor has chewed up everything in sight.
- Sticks of course; but also chair legs, homework papers. (Dogs really do eat your homework!); picture albums; and as Tom Van Deventer knows, even reimbursement checks from the church! (Thankfully, it was still recognizable.)

Now Baylor is a lot of work, and he's a lot of fun, too – to give him credit.

- Early in the morning, I take him out to a field to run while I walk.
- He does tricks – sit, shake, roll over, lie down, and even "pray" where he kneels his front paws on a chair.
- He stays in a kennel crate when we're out, or can't watch him.
- So when we come home the first thing, we do is let him out.
- Sometimes it's urgent, he's gotta go - and he bursts out the door.
- But lately, when it's not so urgent – before going out, he just rolls over on his back and stretches, and waits for us to rub his chest.
- He just rolls over, not in a hurry, and looks up with that look only a dog can give. It says, "just glad to be here."
- It says, "I want to be here – with you – right now."
- Now we might be tired from a long day, or needing to fix supper, or do the next thing on the "to do" list – but Baylor, sort of teaching us like Yoda, looks up rolled over on his back, saying "Be here now."

I think in a much deeper, closer way God wants us to just be with him in the quiet.

- We just sit with him; we pay attention – maybe we'll hear him say something; maybe we'll just be together with him.
- Mostly, we are just together. God just wants us next to him.

From Monday afternoon to Tuesday afternoon, Pastor Deb took a personal retreat at the Benet Retreat Center.

- Now some might think, O that's just vacation.
- But for the disciple of Jesus, a retreat is an intentional time to be with God whether it's a private or group retreat.
- It's for all those who follow Jesus – not just pastors. We need these times to spend focused quiet time with God, beyond just a few minutes.
- Deb, describe what it was like to spend that quiet, focused time with God?

So, how do we begin to experience more solitude: "Just sitting together with God?"

- Now reading our Bible or a devotional is good, and God often speaks to us through this.
- Yet, here's a little thing you can do to just be with God, just sit together with Him.
- First, find a quiet time and space, maybe a spot in your home before others get up, or just before bed.

- Get comfortable. (not too comfortable – the point is not to fall asleep!) The point is to be with God, to sit together with Him.
- You'll begin by just taking about 5 minutes for this. Now, begin by noticing your breathing, flowing in and out. Take a minute for that.
- As thoughts come, you might want to imagine putting them on a conveyer belt, letting them go away, knowing you can get it back to them after you finish.
- As you just sit with God, it may be helpful to focus on a word that draws you to God when your mind starts to wander – a word like peace, or love, or picture an image.
- Sometimes, I try to picture meeting Jesus face to face for the first time.
- I just imagine getting a great big bear hug from him. Wrapped up in his love.
- After a few minutes, say something like, “Thank you God, for being present in my life.”

So that's it.

- Just find a quiet time and place.
- Be still and begin by noticing your breathing, in and out.
- Focus on a word or image that draws you to God.
- Say “Thank you, God for being present in my life.”

**Or, as you become quiet, there may be persistent thoughts that won't go away.
“Thoughts may flood your mind that you would rather keep at bay.”**

- Rather than avoid quiet and solitude, just place those thoughts and emotions on a piece of paper.
- Looking at them, ask, What do I need to do or who can I talk to about what I just wrote down. Maybe God is trying to say something through these persistent thoughts.

So that's solitude – the way of Jesus he shows us for less distracting noise in our lives, and more listening and awareness of God's presence.

- Give it a try.
- As you spend a few minutes in God's presence day by day, His presence will sink deeper in your life.