

# Withdrawal--Being Where the Lord Wants Us

by John Newton

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*True happiness and fulfillment come from communion with God and walking in His will, regardless of life's circumstances.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 27:8

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Gods Presence"

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## Description

John Newton reflects on the disappointments he faces in seeking fulfillment from human interactions, acknowledging the need for God's presence to truly satisfy the soul. He contrasts moments of joy in Christian fellowship with times of spiritual dryness and distraction, emphasizing the importance of God's help in all aspects of life. Newton appreciates the value of solitude and believes that being in God's will, even in challenging circumstances, is the safest and most fulfilling place to be. He encourages a focus on walking in obedience and trust, recognizing that true happiness comes from communion with God.

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## Transcript

January 10, 1775.

There is hardly any thing in which the Lord permits me to meet with more disappointment, than in the advantage I am ready to promise myself from creature-converse. When I expect to meet any of my Christian friends, my thoughts usually travel much faster than my body: I anticipate the hour of meeting, and my imagination is warmed with expectation of what I shall say, and what I shall hear; and sometimes I have had seasons for which I ought to be more thankful than I am. It is pleasant indeed when the Lord favours us with a happy hour, and is pleased to cause our hearts to burn within us while we are speaking of his goodness.

But often it is far otherwise with me, I carry with me a dissipation of spirit, and find that I can neither impart nor receive. Something from within or from without crosses my schemes, and when I retire I seem to have gained nothing but a fresh conviction, that we can neither help nor be helped, unless the Lord himself is pleased to help us. With his presence in our hearts, we might be comfortable and happy if shut up in one of the cells of Newgate: without it, the most select company, the most desirable opportunities', prove but clouds without water.

I have sometimes thought of asking you, whether you find that difference between being abroad and at home that I do? But I take it for granted that you do not; your connections and intimacies are, I believe,

chiefly with those who are highly favoured of the Lord, and if you can break through or be upon your guard against the inconveniences which attend frequent changes and much company, you must be very happy in them.

But I believe, considering my weakness, the Lord has chosen wisely and well for me, in placing me in a state of retirement, and not putting it in my power, were it ever so much my inclination, to be often abroad. As I stir so seldom, I believe when I do it is not, upon the whole, to my disadvantage; for I meet with more or less upon which my reflections afterwards may, by his blessing, be useful to me, though at the time my visits most frequently convince me how little wisdom or skill I have in improving time and opportunities. But were I to live in London, I know not what might be the consequence. Indeed I need not puzzle myself about it, as my call does not lie there; but I pity and pray for those who do live there; and I admire such of them as, in those circumstances which appear so formidable to me, are enabled to walk simply, humbly, and closely with the Lord. They remind me of Daniel, unhurt in the midst of lions, or of the bush which Moses saw, surrounded with flames, yet not consumed, because the Lord was there. Some such I do know, and I hope you are one of the number.

This is certain, that if the light of God's countenance, and communion with him in love, afford the greatest happiness we are capable of, then whatever tends to indispose us for this pursuit, or to draw a veil between him and our souls, must be our great loss. If we walk with him, it must be in the path of duty, which lies plain before us when our eye is single, and we are waiting with attention upon his word, Spirit, and providence. Now, wherever the path of duty leads we are safe; and it often does lead and place us in such circumstances as no other consideration would make us choose. We were not designed to be mere recluses, but have all a part to act in life. Now, if I find myself in the midst of things disagreeable enough in themselves to the spiritual life; yet if, when the question occurs, What dost thou here? My heart can answer, I am here by the will of God; I believe it to be, all things considered, my duty to be here at this time, rather than elsewhere. If, I say, I am tolerably satisfied of this then I would not burden and grieve myself about what I cannot avoid or alter, but endeavour to take all such things up with cheerfulness, as a part of my daily cross; since I am called, not only to do the will of God, but to suffer it: but if I am doing my own will rather than his, then I have reason to fear, lest I should meet with either a snare or a sting at every step. May the Lord Jesus be with you!

I am, &c.

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