

# Solitude and Silence - Luke 4:42

by Jon Courson

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*Solitude and silence are essential for spiritual growth, allowing us to hear God's voice clearly and develop a deeper understanding of ourselves and others.*

**Topics:** "Spiritual Discipline", "Quiet Reflection"

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## Description

Jon Courson emphasizes the importance of solitude in being used by God, drawing inspiration from Jesus' practice of retreating to quiet places. He highlights four key results of spending time in solitude: realization of self, compassion for others, transformation of society, and preparation for ministry. Courson explains how solitude allows for self-reflection, compassion, societal impact, and spiritual preparation, citing biblical examples like John the Baptist, Moses, and Jesus who experienced significant encounters with God in solitude.

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## Transcript

"If a man wants to be used by God, he cannot spend all of his time with people." -A. W. Tozer

Jesus was One Who, better than any other, knew the importance of solitude. That is why we see Him repeatedly, going off into a desert place, alone. Following, are four results of time spend in such solitude . . .

### Realization of Self

When you're in a quiet place away from other people, suddenly you can't blame your schedule, your peers, or your family for your frustration or failure. That's why people avoid being alone. That is why they keep the TV on, the radio loud, people around. They don't want to come face to face with themselves.

### Compassion for Others

After receiving revelation of myself, I am no longer as hard on you. The reason people come down on others, judge others, find fault with others is because they have spent little time alone in the presence of the Lord -- for if they did, like Isaiah, who spend the first five chapters of the book which bears his name saying, 'Woe unto you'; 'Woe unto you'; 'Woe unto you'; -- after seeing the Lord high and lifted up, like Isaiah they would say, 'Woe is me. I am a man of unclean lips,' (Isaiah 6:5).

That is why sometimes one of the best things we can do for people is to absent ourselves from them. When we're constantly with people, we have a tendency to find fault. But when we spend a season in solitude, after truly seeing ourselves, we emerge with greater compassion for others.

### Transformation of Society

Society is transformed not so much by people picketing, marching, or even voting. I suggest that when you study history -- particularly European history -- you cannot help but notice that monarchs, potentates, and powers were moved by monks -- men who chose lives of solitude. Withdrawing from society, they changed the face of Europe politically.

Regarding society as a shipwreck from which each individual must swim for his life, the desert fathers knew they were helpless to do any good for others as long as they themselves floundered about in the wreckage. These were men who believed that to allow oneself to drift along passively accepting the tenets and values of society was to court disaster. And once they got a foothold on solid ground, they discovered they had not only the power, but also the obligation to pull their entire culture to safety as well.

Consequently, as decades passed, philosophers and thinkers, rulers and politicians journeyed to the desert in order to hear from them and be instructed by them. Thus, Europe was transformed by men who realized the best way to stand on solid ground was through moments, years, and decades spent seeking God and living a solitary life.

### Preparation For Ministry

When did the Word of God come to John? When he was in the wilderness. When was Moses called to lead the people of Israel? After spending 40 years in the desert. When did Jesus begin His public ministry? After spending 40 days in solitude.

There is something about solitude which is absolutely essential in the lives of spiritual men, for, because the Lord has chosen to speak in a still, small voice which is all too often drowned out in everyday activity, it is in solitude that His voice is heard most clearly (1 Kings 19:12).

'That's all well and good,' you may be thinking, 'but withdrawing to the desert is simply not practical for me.' That being the case for most of us, there is a way in which every one of us can practice a life of daily solitude. That way is silence. Silence can be the private desert you carry with you wherever you go. But it's not easy.

Besides speaking an average of 40-60,000 words a day, the average person will receive 1500 messages every day from Madison Avenue, saying, 'Buy me; taste me; drive me.' Whether generated by Coca-Cola or Cadillac a constant barrage of noise is hurled at us over billboard, radio, and television. As a result, the value of words is diminished in our society. But this problem is not ours alone.

Concerning much talk, an Early Church Father wrote the following: When the door of a steam bath is left open, the heat escapes. Likewise, even though everything it says may indeed be good, the soul's cognizance of God is dissipated through the door of speech.

Without the Holy Spirit to keep its understanding free of fantasy, the intellect pours out a welter of confused thoughts. Ideas of value always shun verbosity. Being foreign to confusion and fantasy, timely silence is precious, for it is nothing less than the mother of the wisest of our thoughts. 'That which was

from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, that which we have seen and heard, now we declare unto you,' said John, 'that you might have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and His Lord, Jesus Christ,' (I John 1:1-2). John shared freely -- but he did not share that which he had not touched.

Could it be that the reason our sharing is sometimes not received or impacting is due to the fact that we are speaking that which we ourselves have not touched, heard, or seen? Could it be that the reason we have not touched, heard, or seen is because we have not been in solitude? And could it be that we have not been in solitude because we have not desired to pay the price of silence? 'Learn to be quiet,' said Paul (I Thessalonians 4:11). 'Let every man be quick to hear and slow to speak,' James echoes (1:19).

In Luke's Gospel, as I see the blossoming of John's ministry, and -- to an infinitely greater degree -- the ministry of Jesus, I realize that both ministries were birthed in times of silence. May the Lord call us into a greater understanding of solitude and silence -- that we might speak all the more effectively, and live in true intimacy with the Father.

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