

# The Need for a Deserted Place

by Shane Idleman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of finding time to spend with God in a quiet, peaceful location, known as a deserted place, to regain focus, energy, and direction.*

**Duration:** 46:03

**Scripture:** Psalm 27:8, Isaiah 41:10, Isaiah 55:6, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 14:30, Matthew 14:34, Philippians 4:6-7, Hebrews 13:5, James 4:8

**Topics:** "Spiritual Renewal", "Prayer Life"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of retreating to a deserted place to seek God, regroup, contemplate, seek wisdom, rest, and restore spiritual health. It highlights the need to ask Jesus to reveal Himself earnestly and humbly, pursuing Him with intensity and duration in prayer. The message encourages overcoming fear through seeking God and not waiting for darkness to turn to the light. It stresses the significance of pursuing God and earnestly seeking Him, even in times of feeling abandoned or forsaken.

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## Transcript

Matthew 14, verse 15. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.

But Jesus said to them, They do not need to go away, you give them something to eat. And they said to Him, We have here only five loaves and two fish. And He said, Bring them here to me.

Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish. And looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples.

And the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled. And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments that remained.

Now those who had eaten were about 5,000 men besides women and children. And there's so many sermons been preached on this. I mean, you've heard probably dozens, as have I, on, you know, God, give him whatever you have and he can multiply it.

And there's so much truth in that. But what I want to, again, talk about was this need for a deserted place. And to get there, I want to rewind what we read last week.

Because when the disciples said, This is a deserted place. They were here at this deserted place. How did they get there? Why were they at this deserted place in the wilderness? It doesn't make any sense.

There's no provision, there's no food, there's no water. That's why they said, We've got to get them out of here. This is a deserted place.

Well, here's why they're there. Last week I read verse 13. When Jesus heard what happened, when John the Baptist was beheaded, he withdrew by boat privately to a deserted place, to a solitary place.

Now hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, and he healed their sick. So this is why they're in a deserted place.

Jesus, the Son of God, actually was retreating to a deserted place to spend time with his Father and to pray and to seek God. And the people came to him in this deserted place. Now what is the purpose of the deserted place? And a lot of this is going to make a little bit more sense as I go through.

But in the same way that the body recuperates during sleep, we recover spiritually and regain strength when we retreat to a deserted place. Now it's interesting, side note, did you know that that's when your body recuperates and heals itself, is at night? When people work out at the gym, it's not doing this that's building the muscle. What's building the muscle? This.

That's breaking down the muscle. And the sleep is what rejuvenates it. Same with the human body.

As we begin to break down, and that's why I believe there's a lot of health-related illness, because people aren't getting enough sleep. And if you look at the parallels, people aren't spending enough time with God. There's not a deserted place, so they're dying spiritually and they're dying physically.

There's no spiritual strength, there's no physical strength, because we need that sleep. So in the same way that the body recuperates during sleep, we recover and regain strength when we retreat to a deserted place. And I'll just be 100% up front with you tonight.

Probably the biggest difference, of course, talking about the Word of God, talking about worship, but the biggest difference from year 2000 until now, 15 years, the biggest difference in my personal walk with the Lord has been because of this topic, the deserted place. You have to pull back. Do you ever hear the word, I need to go on a retreat? Why do they say that? The word really comes retreating.

You're retreating from war. You're going back into a deserted place. And it's through these times in the deserted place that you spend time with the Father.

It's in the deserted place. I don't know where you have it. Mine's out in the garage.

There's a room we built out there out in the garage. It's this place where I can spend time with God. And without that deserted place, it's impossible to get direction.

It's impossible for the Word of God to come alive. It's impossible for worship and things to change your heart. The heart is changed in the deserted place.

It's not changed in the busyness of the day. The funny thing is, even though hearts are changed in our Saturday night service, they're really changed when they get home and they start making the changes they need to make. And they start spending time in the Word of God.

We see them weeks later. That's where the change took place, in this deserted place. And I know it's the hardest thing that people are contending for right now, this time alone with God.

Because what happens? Life gets busy. And we don't want to spend this time. But that's what it is.

It's going on a retreat. It's drawing back from war. Life is war.

We're in a spiritual war. You've got to retreat and go back into that deserted place. And I've mentioned this many times before.

A lot of times when we counsel people and talk to people, and there's problems in marriage, there's problems in there. Tell me about your deserted place. Or tell me about your devotional life.

Tell me how much time you're spending in the Word of God and worship and prayer. And you want to guess what the answer is? I'm too busy. Oh, Shane, I don't have time for that.

Don't you hear me? What's going on? I say, yeah. Don't you hear me? What's going on? You need to get back into that deserted place, that time alone with God to get communion with God. And I truly believe that one of the reasons why so many people are so antsy or stir crazy or they just can't sit still, I've got to get out of my house, I believe often it's the attack of the enemy to get you out.

Because I've had to fight that many times. Go back and stir crazy, I want to get out, I can't just sit around doing nothing. But it's once you press through that, once the flesh submits and you say, no, we're staying here and we're seeking God, and then the flesh realizes, okay, I'm not getting out of here.

And then you can spend time seeking God and not getting distracted. One of the biggest weapons the enemy has is distraction, being too busy. Because you will not be led by God if you're too busy to hear from him.

It's impossible. So this need for a diverted place is absolutely important to your walk with the Lord. I would actually throw it out there and say this, you can measure your spirituality by how well you have a prayer life and a deserted time away into spending time with God.

You can measure a person's spirituality. Very mature, solid Christian, they spend time with God. Immature Christian, lots of issues, always walking in the flesh, always, no, there's no prayer time.

Well, I get a few minutes in the morning, yeah, exactly, but we're in a hurry. So there's a, Jesus even, the Son of God took time and went to a deserted place. And he stayed there and he just, and he soaked it in, he spent time with his father.

Luke 18, one, then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. Philippians 4, 6, do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God. Romans 8, 26, in the same way the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, we do not, we don't even know what to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

Now it's interesting, as I was looking at these, these things require some time. You're not going to sit there for four or five minutes and present all your requests to God. And Lord, I don't even know what to pray for, my heart is breaking right now for the church, my heart is breaking for the nation, my heart is breaking for my kids, my heart, Lord, my heart is breaking, I don't even know how to pray.

Spirit, would you come in and use, there's groanings there, Lord, I don't know what to pray for, but all I know is if you don't move and you don't move quick, everything's going to fall apart. I need you in those, you can't just, okay, I'm done. How silly is that? The need for a deserted place, you need to spend time with God.

And I get in trouble sometimes for saying this, but one day, one day, a day in the presence with God is better than four years in a seminary. It is. Am I getting seminary? Of course not.

But one day in the presence of God will teach you more than four years of seminary could because a lot of it is just intellectual study. And there's no spiritual power, there's no break. See, I can read about repentance, but if I don't do it, I can read about fasting, but if I don't do it, I can read about love and grace, but if I don't express it and don't feel it, it's all mechanical.

It's mechanical, you're going through, like a machine, you're going through the motions. And so many people are going through the motions, but they don't have time for that deserted place. And I know it's not easy, it's very difficult.

Many things try to sidetrack us and we get busy and we get off course, but I believe God's wanting us to get back to the need for a deserted place, especially as we see the times now and the news and everything that's happening. If this doesn't say, if it doesn't scream, get back to the prayer closet, get back to the deserted place, for if my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek and turn, then I'll heal their land, but we're not doing that. So here's interesting, one of the things a deserted place means, the word desert or deserted, don't think of a strawberry shortcake right now, just think of a desert like we're at right now, barren and without life-sustaining elements.

Barren and without life-sustaining elements. And it's interesting, that was the problem here. That's why they said, this is a deserted place, we need to go, because it's not going to sustain life.

There's no water, there's no food. And we usually don't ask God for things until we encounter a desert place. We used to rely on God a lot more than we do now, and I just even thought back on how people relied on him, even if it didn't rain.

You realize that we just take everything for granted now? You've got a big aqueduct up there, you've got everything. The rain and healing and food and provision, people used to rely on God for a lot. Lord, if it doesn't rain, if you don't bring food, if you don't bring provision, I'm sick, well guess what, you can't go down to Kaiser, you can't go to the dentist and spend \$2,000 on a root canal, we get that problem fixed.

You just have to trust on God. There's a trust there. So barren places are good.

It's good to go to that deserted place and feel, I don't have the life-sustaining elements, I don't have what I'm used to, I don't have the comforts of the television, the media, I don't have these things. God says, good, now I can speak to you, now I can direct you, now you're in that still small place where I can speak to you with the still small voice of the Holy Spirit as you wait on me. And he will often take sustaining elements away from us so we see our need for him.

And many of the points, they're saying, we can't do it here, Jesus, this is a deserted place. He'd say, exactly. Now you're going to see, they wanted to take them to the city and to a local grocery store, parallel to where we're at here, and provide, but Jesus said, I am your provision.

I will supply in the barrenness where there's nothing here, there's no fruit, there's nothing that will sustain life. Watch me, and that's a miracle. And I've seen it in our own lives.

Once we get to that barren place where you get the call, it's your final check, there's no job, there's no work coming in, how are we going to pay, how are we going to, and all the life-sustaining things are removed, so we look to the sustainer himself. But so many people get bitter and resentful instead of getting into that deserted place and seeking him. And a lot of people, anytime I talk about this, they'll say, Shane, that's great for some, but I just don't have the time.

That's great for some people, but I don't have the time. And I even wrote this down here, I said, let's be honest. We find time for those things we want to do.

Let's just be honest here. We find time for those things we want to do. The beach, Los Angeles for events, countless hours on Facebook, YouTube, the movies, eating out, air show.

Those things we want to do, we find time for. So I'm too busy as a cop-out. We can't be too busy for God, that's actually an oxymoron.

The best time of your day should be spent usually in those morning hours seeking him, or if you're an evening person, seeking him. I truly believe you should try to get in both. The enemy loves keeping us busy, so we avoid the desert place.

But think about this, where was Moses led? Backside of the desert. Where was Jesus led for 40 days? What about Elisha? What about Paul? You know, it's interesting, the Bible talks about when Paul was converted, the road to Damascus, his name was changed from Saul to Paul, he's now a believer. Galatians 1, I believe 1.8 says, Paul says that I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood.

And they think that he went to the Arabian desert for 2-3 years before he actually went out and ministered. Because it's that desert time that prepares you for life. You go into the deserted place, and now you can handle life.

See, that retreat, I need to go back and regain my focus, my stamina, my energy, I need to spend time with the Father so we come out, now we're ready for the world. I go back, spend time with the Father, now I go out, I'm ready for the world. I go back and spend time with the Father, now I go out and go into the world.

But most people, it's all this. World, world, world. And they're like, Shane, I'm losing the battle here.

Where's your deserted place? And actually in a lot of churches, this seems foolish. Because you know, I write a lot of articles on prayer and fasting and revival, and people are like, that's so 1800s. So 1800s, what do they mean? Well, you know, life was slow.

I would say that we need it just as much now as we ever have before. I'm actually jealous of the 1800s. No cell phone.

Hey, Chris, I'll see you next week when I see you. Ride my horse. It's just the quietness, the restingness.

That's why a lot of the great devotional books came from those time periods with the Puritans and the Pilgrims and devotional writers. And they had time. It's amazing how much we go like this.

Do you realize you all could write a couple books a year if you'd replace this with this. You could read the Bible through and through at least a year if you replace this with this. So we don't have time.

It's just a cop-out. I'm just shooting you straight. We have the time.

Actually, we have more time than anybody else. We can program everything. We can have apps for this.

We can do this. We can actually put aside time. They used to work 12 hours a day.

Now we're working 8. We get a lunch break. We get this. We get 3. I mean, people go home and they get 3, 4, 5 hours to just sit at home.

People would die for that in other countries. Hey, you're off at 3.30. Really? Yeah, but here's what we do for 6 hours. And we just get caught up in this mode.

I said this before, but I'll say it again. Being antsy and saying that I just can't sit still, or I just can't do a study, it's hurting you spiritually more than you realize. Because I believe the enemy will come in, and he'll disrupt, and he'll try to jitter you.

I can't sit still. I don't want to be in this house. And you just get out.

You've got to be busy. Social butterflies have a hard time being in the Word of God. It's okay to just take an hour or two.

Get home early, off the phone, off the TV. Lauren will spend time with you. That's how you get direction.

That's how you get direction. You can watch the basketball tournament, Grey's Anatomy, Vampire Diaries, Dancing with the Stars, The Blacklist, American Idol, Scandal, and American Crime, but I'm going to retreat. Those are all the top shows.

And when we have no time for retreat, to go back. See, we're actually feeding the enemy. We're actually feeding him when we should be retreating.

There's enough of this garbage just floating around. I don't need to add to it. That's the whole point of retreating back.

The need for a deserted place is to regroup. And then verse 22, this is a famous passage about Jesus walking on the sea. Matthew 14, verse 22.

Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side. And while he sent the multitudes away, and when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up onto the mountain by himself to pray. A deserted place.

What's wrong with this guy? He's the son of God. Why does he have to go and pray so much? Just the day before, he was at a deserted place. A crowd came to him.

Now it's evening. It's almost evening. He goes up on a mountain by himself to pray.

If the son of God had to take time and pray, who in the world do we think we are where it doesn't affect us? It affects us more than we think. Because, amazing, after you spend time in the prayer closet, and then you look back on your life and go, how did I even get through life with that kind of schedule? I wasn't scheduling my time. My time was scheduling me.

And there's a difference there. So he went up on a mountain by himself to a deserted place. Now when evening came, he was alone there.

But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. So the disciples are out in the middle of the sea. Jesus is up on the top of a mountain praying.

In the evening had come, right? And now it says, in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them. Now this is interesting because the Romans and the Jews would break the night up into watches. So you've got six at night till nine at night, is the first watch.

Nine at night till midnight, the second watch. Midnight till three in the morning, the third watch. Three in the morning till six, the fourth watch.

So somewhere between three in the morning, four, five, and six, Jesus says, okay, I'm done praying. Let me go out and walk on the water. The story we're very familiar with.

But I don't want to rush to that because you might think, and it's entered my thought before, how can you pray for, what is that, six, seven hours? Eight hours? I mean, I know it's Jesus, but that would be, but then you have to think about something. He obviously had a close relationship with God. I mean, that's a given.

But he's talking to God. He's expressing himself to God. He's getting direction.

If we really thought, and see, this is the hard thing between belief we know but we don't feel sometimes. But once we understand God is there, God is listening, if you could see him, would you be rushed? You'd sit there for hours and hours and even days. You'd fall asleep, you're not here, you're still there, and you talk to the, you wouldn't just be in a hurry.

If you could talk to God right now, would you be in a hurry? He manifests himself, his glory falls, you're broken and humbled, you can barely, and you're able to commune with him. Say, okay, it's been about 10 minutes, dancing with the stars is, tomorrow? The hours would go by. But folks, that's exactly what it is, praying.

This isn't some cosmic killjoy. This isn't some doting grandfather way off on a distant planet who doesn't hear you. He says, come to me and bear your heart.

And though you don't hear audible voices, the spirit inside of me, the spirit inside of you, cries, Abba, Father, my Father is listening. My Father's directing, my Father's breaking me, my prayer's changed now. Now it's from all this list of things now, Lord, I just wanna be used, I wanna be broken for you.

My attitude's not right in this area. And you're spending time with the Father, even though you don't hear audible voices, in most cases, there are groanings that you start to hear, at least after, but it doesn't happen in five minutes. Sometimes it's 10, 15, 20, sometimes an hour goes by and God's just ministering to your spirit because the Holy Spirit is ministering.

There's a connection there. I mean, if we really believe that we are praying to a God who's stopping and listening and going to give direction and calm your fears and change your situation and give you hope, so when you leave there, I mean, when I read the old Welsh revivals, I read people like William Bradford and David Brainerd on the mission field and John Welsh and all these guys, it was amazing. Sometimes they would say, they would be on their knees, they would be praying and they would say, finally get up and say, it's been answered.

They would tell their wife, you just spent three hours, it's been answered, I've got so much confirmation. It's done, it's done, God has spoke to me. But it wasn't after five or 10 minutes.

It's time with the Father, spending time. When you can get up and say, it's done, it's been resolved, the fear is gone. You see, if you're afraid, fear can't live in the prayer closet very long.

When you open the word, when you put on worship, fear has to flee. I don't care if you're sitting in Iranian jail. Fear will flee when you get into the presence of God.

That's the need for a deserted place. If we could get more people back to that deserted place, and it's funny, I know, like you know, we know a lot of people. I know a lot of people on Facebook and I know a lot of people going through a lot of issues.

I mean, you name it. And ironically, I've noticed a lot of times there's a post at eight in the morning, there's a post at 8.45 in the morning, there's nine, 9.30, 10, did you check out this video? It's just like all day long, they're just posting things. All day long.

Now I've heard about ISIS enough, can we take a break? All day long. Did you know the president's coming after your health care? All day long. Did you know he's trying to shut down churches? All day, it's just all day long.

Your posts start at eight in the morning and they don't end until 10 at night. All day long. You have no time for prayer.

You wonder why you're scared and fearful and depressed and anxious. You're out of the deserted, you need to go back to that deserted place. You will have withdrawals.

Remember I lost my phone for five days? I was doing this. There's no phone even here and I'm doing this. For five days, withdrawals.

What's going on? Withdrawals from media? How sad is that? We have to break away from that. That's why the reason I'm spending a little bit of time here is it will be difficult. You're not gonna turn off all that, go sit down and go, whoa, I feel tremendous.

You start going, I gotta pay those bills, I forgot about that call, MasterCard this, I gotta get back to that person. Okay, I'll do that tomorrow, meet me here. And we just get distracted.

I don't know what it looks like in your life, but you have to find that deserted place. A place where you can go and spend time with God. If you need to get out of the house, take a drive.

Got little kids? Have your spouse watch it, rotate. Just take a drive, put on worship, and read. And you'll come back a better husband, a better father.

Here's the thing. Jesus got direction from these deserted places and spending time with God. He would go up and then pick the 12 disciples.

He would go up and get direction. He goes, I don't do anything that the Father doesn't tell me to do. When was the Father telling him to do this? As he was walking some, oh, got it, got it, okay.

I mean, probably. But he also knew the will of the Father because he spent time with him. And then he would go out and minister.

So now, in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went to them walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, it is a ghost. And they cried out for fear.

So another word that I want to talk about briefly on deserted, what deserted means, it means unfrequented. Unfrequented and without habitation. You have to go, you don't have to drive necessarily, but you have to, this deserted place and seeking God, you have to go somewhere that's not inhabited.

Meaning there's not little kids running around all over. There's not, the spouse has that on, you have this, that's not going to work. This is a shoot you straight sermon.

It's not going to work. You have to remove yourself from the environment and find an uninhabited place. Take a long walk out in the desert.

I know people that do that. Take a long drive. Go somewhere.

Coffee shop or somewhere and just sit. But even that's hard because you got all these people, oh, how you doing, how you doing, how you doing? And you just can't get anything done. You have to find a place that's uninhabited.

There's not people coming in frequently. Why would it say Jesus retreated to a mountain by himself? All the time, whenever Jesus would go pray, he didn't want other people to pray. It wasn't in the busy city ever.

It was away from people. And on that note, I want to say something on this point. When it comes to prayer, length and intensity, I believe does matter.

Length and intensity matters, but it's not as a person, I prayed an hour and you're making a checklist. It's a person, I spent an hour with God. I sought my Father.

And there's lots of studies that come out now. I mean, Max Lucado has a good one, I think, After Amen or Before Amen, something like that. But that one's really big on just a five-minute prayer or 10 minutes, just whatever you can squeeze in.

And that's true. I don't have any problem with that whatsoever as far as taking the time and five minutes or 10 minutes here and seeking God. That's a very good discipline.

But I believe that intensity and duration can matter. Intensity and duration can matter. Father, she asked her kids, would you rather want five minutes with me or five hours? What would the kids say? They want that time.

So there's time there. Because the real reason is what we value, we put our time into. If I value something, I'm gonna invest my time there.

So when I value the prayer closet, when I value time with God, there's gonna be some, I'm not gonna be in a hurry. I mean, when you're talking to somebody, do they ever do this? Uh-huh. What was, okay.

Yeah, can I get, hold on. There's just no, there's no focus. That's what we do sometimes with God.

We just sit down, we're in a hurry, we gotta get, and you have to find that deserted place. You have to take time away from the busyness of the day. I mean, I just last week thought about, told my wife too, I said, if I should leave my, I don't read this one at home.

I have a bigger one I got about 15 years ago. I have tons of margin notes and journaling. I said, I should just leave that out on the kitchen sink or counter, and instead of Facebook or instead of this or instead of that, I'm just gonna start doing this and making the time for that.

Because if you don't do that, if you don't schedule time, time will schedule you. One or the other's in charge. And if I could just, if I could get more people to finding that deserted place, you wouldn't need as much, we wouldn't need as much, we wouldn't need as much counseling, we wouldn't need as much, there wouldn't be as many bickering and complaining and fighting, you'd come out of that just a better person.

It's when the works of the flesh take over that we see all these other things happen. I like what Spurgeon said, I know of no better thermometer to your spiritual temperature than the measure of the intensity of your prayers. There's no better way, we're not talking about in some churches, you go, louder, you pray! Lord, you can hear us, you're here today, pray, pray, pray! The louder we go, the more he'll hear us.

That's not what he's talking about here, there's an intensity there. There's an excitement, there's intensity, it's not just, well Lord, help me get through today and hopefully that deal will go through. Yeah, we've got some hard things going on.

Alright, thanks. That's a measure of your spiritual heart. That's a measure, it's a thermostat.

A thermometer, actually, he said here. A thermometer to your spiritual temperature. And I like what Leonard Ravenhill said, he reminded us that we have the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and two-thirds of the angels on our side.

We cannot just go home and cry about it. We cannot just go home and say, oh, woe is me. We have the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Father in creation, the Son in redemption, the Holy Spirit regenerating and helping us seek the hand of the Father, and then two-thirds of the angels on our side.

So when you go to battle, you are well equipped, but you gotta pull down heaven. You gotta pull down heaven. Daniel prayed and fast, even the angel fought for what, 21 days? God says, I heard your prayer 21 days ago, but there was war in heaven and the heavenlies.

I don't know how that works, it's pretty interesting, but the intensity of his prayers. So when you go into the prayer closet, there's an intensity there. If you say, Lord, I don't have it, if you don't feel that, say, Lord, I need it.

Would you begin to fill me with your spirit? Give that intensity, and then when God, sometimes he'll just overshadow you with his love. Sometimes he'll overshadow you with his grace. Sometimes, and you pray to pray, this doesn't happen often, or you'll be like a weeping baby when he overshadows you with how the heart, his heart is breaking over the condition of the world, and you see lost sinners perishing.

You see the little girl being abused in Lancaster, the little boy being almost killed at two years old because his dad is on a drug binge, and he gives you the heart of a father, and you break, and you weep, and you pray. There's intensity there. That's God drawing your heart into his.

That's prayer. You start praying like that, you think you're gonna be done in five minutes? Verse 27, but immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, Be of good cheer. It is I. Do not be afraid.

So he walks out on the water. He says, Be of good cheer. Jesus spoke to them, and Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it's you, if it's you, command to me to come to you on the water.

So he said, Come. And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. And I thought it was interesting that Jesus spoke to them.

He knows they're afraid. He speaks to them. And for some reason, I wrote this down, I wanted to highlight it, but he wants to speak to you as well.

Jesus wants to speak to us. That really registered with me. He spoke to them, basically said, Guys, it's okay, it's me.

I mean, I would probably play a joke for a while. You know, just go around the boat. But he just said, he's walking out there.

He said, It's me. It's me. He spoke to them.

He comforted them. He wants to comfort you. But you're not gonna get comfort if you don't spend time in the deserted place, if you don't spend time in the prayer closet, if you don't spend time praying even as you're driving.

That's where the comfort comes from, the dialogue. That's why I know it's funny, but I just had to write these down and went online. What are the top 10 things people are watching? Grey's Anatomy, Vampire Diaries, Dancing with the Stars, The Blacklist, American Idol, Scandal, and American Crime.

And we wonder why we don't have the heart of the Father, but we have the heart of Satan many times. Because that's what we're spending time with. So when Jesus says, Come, I want to speak to you, we say, Nope, I want to hear from somebody else.

I don't want to hear your voice. I want to hear my flesh be pleased. And Jesus said, I want to speak to you.

I want to guide you, but you've got to come to me. And of course, I have to say this. God often asks us to do what we can't do on our own.

Boy, I've noticed that. He'll ask you to do what you can't do on your own. I can't do that.

The prodigal son is gone. I can't do anything about that. No, you can't, but you can pray.

Listen, prayer moves the hand of God. You can't do anything. I can't do anything.

Many times in couples, I can't do anything about my marriage. Oh, yeah, you can pray. That's the greatest weapon you possess.

And you know what people tell me eight times out of ten? I tried that. Whoa. I tried that.

It doesn't work. I don't know what you tried, but it works. This isn't some gambling device in Vegas where you try that, it doesn't work.

This is God who says, you come to me and answer me. And many times, he's wanting you to change your heart. That's why you don't want the prayer closet.

I don't want the prayer closet because I'm confronted, and now I've got to change. But many times, God will use what we can't do on our own to begin to get us to seek him. And I think it's also okay what Peter said here.

Lord, I mean, you see somebody walking on the water. You're pretty sure it's Jesus. But he said, Lord, if it's you, if it's you, command me to come out to you.

And I just want to encourage you. Some of you tonight have done this many times with so many voices contending in our mind, right? This and this. It's okay sometimes for you to say, Lord, if that's you, Lord, if this is you, would you show me? Lord, if this is you, would you ask me to come to? Lord, if that's you, if this is really you wanting to do that, would you confirm? Would you show me? Would you guide me? He's not going to be mad at that.

So many people, I think, times need to ask, Lord, is it you? Because our feelings get in the way, and then there's hell to pay. But asking him to reveal himself. And also, Jesus came to them in the dark in a deserted place.

And I noted this. I thought it was interesting. We often don't search for the light until the darkness comes.

Especially my kids. Once it's dark, they'll start groping for the light switch. Right? But with Christ, you can walk in the light.

You don't have to wait until the darkness comes to turn on the light. And many times, the dark is here, let me get to the light. But he wants us to walk in the light.

How do you walk in the light? By spending time with the light of the world. That's how you walk in the light. Is to spend time with him.

And get direction. Verse 30, But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, basically, Peter steps out, the wind is boisterous, the waves are going, he was afraid. And beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, Lord, save me! And immediately, Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him and said, O you of little faith, why did you doubt? And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped him, saying, truly, you are the Son of God. And as most of you know, this is no secret, fear paralyzes. Fear leads to failure.

And fear forces us to react instead of respond. Do you know what the whole goal of ISIS is? What's their goal? It starts with T. Terrorism. Terror.

What's that come from? Fear. They want terrorism. They want to create fear.

And he was afraid. And that's why I talk so much about, maybe too much, the media and what we're watching in the news. Because if you're fueling that fear, you're fueling the very thing that Christ says, don't be afraid of.

Don't be afraid. Come to me. And we say, okay, I don't want to, but I'm going to put in my mind all this fear and keep being fearful and keep being fearful.

And then we have no time for the deserted place. We have no time for the prayer closet. So we wonder why we're so fearful and anxious.

Why? This is why a deserted place is so vital to your walk. You retreat and you pull back from the fear. See, if you read ISIS and then you read, this is coming, and then you step back into the prayer closet and open this and say, the Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. You are my rear guard.

You are my right guard. You go before me. You stand above me.

You are my shelter. And you start to get in there and you go, I'm encouraged now. I'm just, and you come out ready for life.

Fear has to flee. There's no way you can worship and read this and still hold on to fear. It has to flee.

Fear can't stay in that presence. It can't stay because you're causing it to leave. Be not anxious for nothing, but with everything in prayer and supplication, let your requests be known to God.

One purpose of retreating is to regroup, contemplate, seek wisdom, rest, and restore your spiritual state. Did you catch all those words? To regroup, to contemplate things before you make a decision, to seek wisdom, to rest, and restore your spiritual state. And I would say the majority of Christians need to do that.

They need to pull back. You need to regroup. You need to contemplate.

You need to use wisdom. You need to seek God. You need to rest and restore your spiritual health.

And it's not going to be done on a fast food, I mean a fast paced American, maybe I should do that in there for somebody, but a fast paced American microwave Christianity. Everything's so fast and it's not going to happen. You've got to spend time there.

And then verse 34, he's closing up. When they crossed over, they came to the land, the land of the Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all the surrounding region, brought to Him all that were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment, and as many as touched them were made perfectly well.

And it's interesting, they sent out to this whole region, and they begged Him. So you see, this isn't a five minute walk. They're sending out to this whole region.

These people are walking miles. Have you ever walked five miles? Straight. It's pretty hard.

These people are walking 5, 10, 15, 20 miles. And they're begging Him, can we just touch the hem of Your garment? And I noticed here, there was an effort to pursue Him. And there's an effort to pursue Him.

When was the last time we made this kind of effort? Now, I'm not saying go walk five miles and hit the freeway, but I'm saying, listen, I'm gonna schedule some things around Christ instead of scheduling Christ around some things. I'm gonna get Him on the calendar. I'm gonna pursue Him.

You know what? Tomorrow, I'm counseling that, and I'm counseling that, and I'm just gonna spend time with Him. Next week, on the calendar, I'm done at five o'clock, and I'm gonna worship Him and seek Him from five to seven at night, or whatever it is. There's a pursuing there.

They pursued Him miles and miles. They walked half hour, an hour, three, four hours. Then they came there and said, if I could just touch the hem of Your garments.

Yeah, we have that now. We can do that now. We cannot just touch the hem of His garment.

We can pull down heaven. You see why there's a little intensity involved? There's gonna take some time, folks. Everybody's gonna watch two hours of Cinderella.

You can give God two hours. Yeah, but God's boring. This is fun.

Well, there we go. What's the spiritual condition of our heart? Again, I'm not saying entertainment's bad. It has its place.

But when it comes to take up all of our energy, and we have no time for the deserted place, and we have no time for God, that's a problem. And they begged Him. Do you know what beg means? Ask someone earnestly and humbly for something.

Earnestly. Earnest. Is earnestly.

I'm seeking you. I'm begging you. Lord, would you meet with me? I don't care if you didn't answer my prayer tomorrow, or today.

I'm gonna be there tomorrow. Lord, if you don't answer it tomorrow, I'm gonna be here next week. If you don't answer it next week, I'm gonna be here next month.

Lord, I'm gonna pursue you earnestly all the days of my life and beg and humbly beseech you that you move on behalf of me. We don't have that anymore. It's like God's a genie in a bottle.

I want this, I want this, and I want that, and if I don't get it, I'm gonna be mad, and I'm not gonna go to church next week. I'm mad at God right now. Don't say that God is silent when your Bible is closed.

Does that hurt? It's supposed to hurt. You got an explanation point right here. Make sure it hurts.

We can't say that God is silent when our Bible is closed. We can't say that God is silent if we're too busy to find a deserted place to seek Him. The problem's never with God.

It's with man, and then the final word that deserted can mean is abandoned. You're abandoned. You're forsaken to fail someone in a time of need, and this is a really good point because a lot of people feel this way right now.

Do you feel abandoned? Do you feel forsaken? Shane, I've been abandoned. I feel forsaken in my deepest times of need. I love this verse.

Hebrews 13, for he himself has said, I will never leave nor forsake you. Yeah, he says, I know you feel the pain, but I will never leave or forsake you, and actually, here's the ironic thing. The pain will drive you to the deserted place.

The problem will force you to the deserted place. If I didn't go through hell in 1999, I would've never found the deserted place. That pain forced me to the prayer closet.

That you've been let down by somebody, that should force you to the prayer closet. This is time of seeking God, so I want to encourage those Christians who haven't been making time for God, I want to encourage you this week to do that. He says, I will never leave, I will never forsake you, but you need to spend time with me, and also, I love how he said, cried out, he said, Lord, save me.

Lord, save me. If there's anybody here who has not been saved by the grace of God, you can cry that out. You can just say, Lord, save me.

Save me. I want salvation. I want that deserted place, and I want that deserted place in my heart filled.

Would you save me?

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Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/Ji6jNEqawVw.mp4>

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