

Silence and Solitude

This is an ancient spiritual discipline that has been practiced for thousands of years. The core idea is for people to withdraw from the cluttered and fast pace of general life and create a time and place to reconnect with God without the usual distractions.

In silence and solitude we give ourselves a chance to hear the voice of God giving us direction and guidance, refuge and comfort.

Luke 5v 15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

Ps 40v1 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

Ps 46v1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

6 ¶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

7 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

8 Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.

10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

11 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

In this Psalm we see an initial faith statement of God being our refuge and our ever present help. This refuge is the same word for shelter. One thing I know about shelter is that you have to enter into it. If it is pouring with rain and you are standing outside your house you will generally hurry into shelter/refuge.

The other key word here is strength most people would love to enter fully into the refuge and strength of God.

Refuge denotes caring and nurturing. Strength denotes empowerment and competence.

So how do we enter in to this ever present refuge and strength?

The answer to this question is available as we read through the Psalm.

v10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

We are shown a way a specific action which leads us into the refuge and strength of God. The action is **Be Still!** The inference of be still in the Hebrew language is to *slacken abate or cease.*

Effectively stop doing what you are doing and take time to know God.

Steps to practice Silence and Solitude

Start small:

- Purposefully take the moments when there is a lull in the day or a break from defined duties and withdraw to a quiet place and wait in silent expectation. Discipline your mind; pushing aside the various thoughts attached to general life and simply say, "I am here Lord waiting for you."

Continue the process

- Schedule into your life on a monthly basis three to four hours of time in order to be silent and practice solitude waiting for him to meet with you. This will deepen and strengthen your relationship with God.

Once a Year

- Consider placing a spiritual retreat into your calendar in order to practice these disciplines. A minimum of 24 hours would be appropriate. The goal is to wait on God giving him your undivided attention. This will bring intimacy and strengthen your relationship with Him.

Silence and solitude is a discipline we are not used to in our fast paced consumer focused society. It is not an easy discipline as our minds continue to wander off and re-engage with the intrusion of life and duty.

However the result of silence and solitude is comfort and empowerment a greater ability to access the ever present help of God.