



## Week 4 | Silence & Solitude

# Gospel Community Leaders Guide

### Pray

As you begin, briefly ask the Spirit to guide your time together, then have a time of silence for individuals to pray privately. Even when together, silence is important. We come to these gatherings with distractions and noise from our lives: work, family, busyness, even serving in the church. Take a moment to encourage your group to silently give these cares over to God and be open to receive what He has to say to them in your group time.

### Discuss

Discuss this week's sermon and the following questions with your group:

*"The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. And he said to them, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." - Mark 6:30-31*

- **As you look at the context of these verses (particularly Mark 6:7-13, 32-34, 53-56), what are Jesus and the disciples in the middle of when Jesus calls them to come and rest?**
- **In the middle of busy seasons, are you often encouraged to stop and rest, or to spend time alone?**
- **What role do you think the regular practice of silence and solitude played in Jesus' emotional health and spiritual life?**
- **What makes spending time in solitude difficult?**

# Encourage

Encourage your group of the following truths:

**Solitude is awkward.** Silence and solitude are difficult in our culture because we are constantly going and we constantly have noise. We often try to protect ourselves from silence and solitude (with TV, music, phones, busyness) because we're afraid to be alone with ourselves. We're afraid of what emotions, memories, and thoughts will come up if we are silent and still before God. This is precisely why silence and solitude are needed. In the noise and rush, we are often hiding parts of our souls that we need to surrender to God.

**We are valuable in our being, not just our doing.** If you tend to be more performance-driven, silence and solitude may feel like a waste of time. You may feel like you are not "getting" anything or "producing" anything out of a time of solitude. Silence and solitude are important for this very reason. They remind us that we are not valuable to God because of what we do; He values us in our very being. Just as we spend unstructured time with family and friends with no expectations of "getting anything" out of it, silence and solitude is a time just to be with Jesus.

**There is no "failure" or "success" in these practices.** This is true for all practices that we'll be discussing, but it's especially easy to feel like a "failure" at silence and solitude. Our minds tend to wander and, when they do, it's easy to feel like a time of solitude is pointless. Start small. If you have never practiced silence and solitude before, begin with a 5-10 minute time of solitude. If you are distracted or restless, don't get frustrated at yourself. Let thoughts that come up pass. If you find a particular thought keeps coming up, surrender it to God, or write it down and purpose to pray about it later. Resist the urge to judge yourself or feel condemned when your mind inevitably begins to wander. Any time alone with Jesus is better than no time alone with Jesus.

# Remind

Remind your group that this week's exercises will work best if you have a few things in mind before you begin:

- Time and place - Choose a time in the day when your mind is alert and you do not feel rushed. Choose a place that is comfortable for you and free of distractions. This might be in your house, but it could also be a park, a place in the church building, a coffee shop, etc.
- Limit distractions - Turn your phone off or put it in another room.
- Be comfortable - If sitting still is not comfortable for you, take a walk or do something mindless with your hands--whatever makes you feel attentive and focused.

