

ActNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Connect Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Connect Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

## Spiritual Disciplines Part 2: Solitude

Luke 5:15-16

Rev Benjamin Lee

### SERMON SYNOPSIS

- **Three key points:**
  - ✓ Solitude as a spiritual discipline is not merely being alone. "Effective solitude is intentional time alone with ourselves and with God" (James Bryan Smith).
  - ✓ Solitude is therefore not the same thing as being in isolation (being cut off from contact with others due to circumstances) or feeling lonely (desiring meaningful human relationships but not having them).
  - ✓ Solitude is essential for deep connection with God. Solitude aligns our will with God's will & helps us to rediscover our dependence on God. But more importantly, solitude helps us see that our identity, sense of belonging & sufficiency are found in God. That is, God is enough and our soul finds its rest in Him.
- **Why practice solitude?**
  - ✓ Because Jesus practiced solitude:
    - (i) Before major events, such as before the start of his earthly ministry (Luke 4:1-2).
    - (ii) After intensive ministry (Luke 5:15-16).
    - (iii) Before crucial decisions (Luke 6:12-13).
    - (iv) In times of distress (Matthew 26:36).
  - ✓ To connect deeply with God means:
    - (i) To be with God & enjoying being in His Presence usually for a longer duration than an everyday time alone with Him, and leisurely!
    - (ii) To remove our masks, reveal our true selves & find God accepting us as we are!
- **How should we practice solitude?**
  - ✓ *Withdraw* from the world to be *with God* and to *draw to God*. This goes beyond the simple absence of people or activities around us.
  - ✓ *Begin* practising! Do short and manageable times of solitude for a start.
  - ✓ *Disconnect* intentionally: Avoid distractions such as mobile phones.
  - ✓ *Have* a simple structure: Pray a familiar prayer (Eg. Lectio 365, "*Lord, I pause to be still, to breathe slowly, to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God.*"), sing a worship song, or meditate God's Word through a devotional.
  - ✓ Be patient. *Gradually increase* the time spent.
- **Conclusion**

God does the deepest work in our times of solitude with Him.

ActNow! (Applying Christ's Teaching NOW) follows the weekly sermon series of TPMC, and challenges us to apply and put into practice the biblical truths we hear each week. It is the recommended Bible discussion material for TPMC's Connect Groups, and leader's notes are available to all Connect Group Leaders and at the Information Counter.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### RELATE

1. When was the last time you spent 5 full minutes alone, simply focusing on God's presence? What about 15 minutes? What about 30 minutes? What are the challenges you face in spending solitary time with God?

### REFLECT

2. How did solitude help people in the Bible to encounter God and face difficult situations? How can it do the same for you?

[Verses to help us go deeper: Exodus 33:7-11a; 1 Kings 19:3-9; Luke 6:12-13]

### RESPOND

3. Commit to spending 15 minutes alone with God and yourself in the next 2 weeks. Follow the guidelines in the sermon synopsis under "How should we practice solitude?" The next time you meet with the group, share how this experience made you feel and what difference it made to your life.

## PRAYER POINTERS

- Praise God for being in-charge-of and in control of everything in our lives, and being bigger than any difficulties or concerns that we may face.
- Thank God for being our friend and being always willing to meet us face to face.
- Ask God to give us discipline to put aside temptations and distractions and the desire to seek deep connection with Him.

## SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE ON

"Be still, and know that I am God." [Psalm 46:10a]