

## Journey Into Solitude

***Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.***

*Mark 1:35*

**Solitude is about creating space alone with God to reflect on the big questions. These daily experimental journeys into Solitude can give you *a taste* of what that kind of experience could be.**

**Preparation:** Get a journal (dollar store notebooks work great!) + a pen to use in your Solitude times to jot down reflections, scriptures, notes, prayers or anything else God nudges you with.

Over time, using such a journal can serve as an encouraging log book of significant mile markers in your lifelong journey of increasing friendship with Jesus – with all of the spiritual health, strength and wholeness that inevitably flow from the sacred space of that relationship.

**Monday:** Intentionality Part A: **Divert Daily, Withdraw Weekly**

**Tuesday:** Personal Audit: **1 Corinthians 13**

**Wednesday:** Intentionality Part B: **Abandon Annually**

**Thursday:** Reflection: **Looking Back / Looking Forward**

**Friday:** Personal Audit: **Galatians 5**

**Saturday:** Reflection: **SWOT Analysis**

**Sunday:** Reflection: **Highest Highs / Lowest Lows**

**Monday**

**Intentionality Part A: Divert Daily, Withdraw Weekly**

Spend some time considering the questions below in an unhurried and open-hearted way. Use your Solitude journal to jot down some of your thoughts and responses, even in point form.

**“Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” – Luke 5:16**

**Divert Daily:**

What does your currently ‘daily’ time look like with God?

Are you happy with where this is at?

If not, what would you want it to look like? Brainstorm freely!

**Withdraw Weekly:**

Do you have a current habit of intentionally withdrawing on a weekly basis to spend extended time alone with God? A day, half day or even a few dedicated hours anywhere in the week?

When would be an ideal time (weekly) for you to engage in this kind of activity?

Where would be the best place for you to practice Solitude, where you can be uninterrupted, as well as feeling free, comfortable and inspired?

What is currently preventing you from making this a reality, and how could you overcome that?

**Take the Leap!**

Make a plan, and then commit to trying these Solitude rhythms for the next 3 weeks, just to see how it feels.

**Tuesday**

**Personal Audit: 1 Corinthians 13, The Love Chapter**

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

**<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.**

<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

**Using the framework of 1 Corinthians 13 as a guide, take some time to reflect with God on the state (and growth) of love in your life.**

Carefully consider each characteristic listed below and allow yourself to honestly examine not just your internal thoughts *about* the characteristic, but the outward expression *of* the characteristic in your daily life.

**Patience**

**Kindness**

**Envy**

**Boasting**

**Pride**

**Honouring/Dishonouring Others**

**Self-Seeking**

**Easily Angered**

**Keeping a Record of Wrongs**

**Delighting in Evil**

**Rejoicing with Truth**

**Protecting**

**Trusting**

**Hope**

**Perseverance**

**Wednesday**

**Intentionality Part B: Abandon Annually**

**Abandon Annually**

Have you ever considered the practice of a once-a-year retreat (or AGM) type experience alone with God? Can you imagine the chance to evaluate and strengthen your relationship, as you reflect on the events and experiences of the past year, while also looking ahead to the future, together?

Does this strike you as a weird concept? Why?

Does it make it easier to imagine if you picture the visible person of Jesus accompanying you?

**Dream Up An Ideal**

If you could design an ideal 'retreat with God' experience – with no barriers of space, time, or finances – what would that ideal retreat look like? Spend a few minutes dreaming it up in detail.

**Adjust for a Realistic Option**

Now spend a few minutes designing a genuine retreat-like experience as close to the above 'dream scenario' as possible, given some of the inescapable limitations of your current life.

When could you do this?

Where could you do this?

What kind of things would you want to talk about, with Jesus?

Consider things like life seasons of busyness vs. those that are quieter, space-swapping options with friends, camping possibilities, daytime retreats of solitude (where you just come home to sleep at night) etc.

**Take the Leap!**

Make a plan and then commit to giving it a try at some point this year. Give a re-listen to Jeff's message (*Solitude: Discovering God's Presence in the Absence - May 17, 2020 - link below*) as a primer just before you head into your retreat experience.

[southridgechurch.ca/message-archives/series/working-out-our-faith-home-edition/](https://southridgechurch.ca/message-archives/series/working-out-our-faith-home-edition/)

## Thursday

### Reflection: Looking Back / Looking Ahead

Reflection is a powerful spiritual practice. It's different than simply reminiscing or recalling the past. It's also much more than just wishing hard for a new future to appear before us. Genuine reflection requires deep thought, deep heart, and deep honesty. When we engage in reflection as a spiritual practice, we invite the Holy Spirit to be part of the conversation. To speak to us and help us see the truth more clearly, both in terms of where we have been, as well as where we need to go up ahead.

**Use your time in Solitude today to reflect prayerfully on the following questions:**

#### **Looking back over the past month:**

1. Where have you seen God at work
  - a. In your life personally?
  - b. In the world around you?
2. Where have you struggled to see or feel God's presence?

#### **Looking ahead to the next few months:**

1. Where do you most long to see God move, maybe even in a miraculous way?
2. Where do you most want to see growth in your own life?
3. What might you need to do, to help make yourself ready for that growth?

**For a more in-depth "Looking Back" exercise, feel free to check out this Year-End Reflection exercise from our Spiritual Practices webpage –**

[southridgechurch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Year-End-Reflection.pdf](https://southridgechurch.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Year-End-Reflection.pdf)

**Friday**

**Personal Audit: Galatians 5, Fruit of the Spirit**

**Galatians 5:22-25**

The Holy Spirit produces a different kind of fruit: unconditional love, joy, peace, patience, kindheartedness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. You won't find any law opposed to fruit like this. Those of us who belong to the Anointed One have crucified our old lives and put to death the flesh and all the lusts and desires that plague us.

Now since we have chosen to walk with the Spirit, let's keep each step in perfect sync with God's Spirit.

**Using the framework of Galatians 5:22-25 as a guide, take some time to reflect with God on both the quantity and quality of the fruit of God's Spirit evidenced in your life.**

Carefully consider each characteristic listed below and allow yourself to honestly examine not just your internal thoughts *about* the characteristic, but the outward expression *of* the characteristic in your daily life as well.

**Unconditional Love**

**Joy**

**Peace**

**Patience**

**Kindheartedness**

**Goodness**

**Faithfulness**

**Gentleness**

**Self-Control**

## Saturday

### Reflection: SWOT Analysis

Imagine today as a year-end mini-review of the state of your relationship with Jesus, and your overall spiritual health.

Using the questions below as a guide, prayerfully reflect on where you were (spiritually speaking) a year ago, compared to where you are today; as well as where you would like to see yourself another year from now.

#### Strengths

- Overall, do you feel spiritually stronger or weaker from where you were a year ago?
- Where and how have you seen yourself grow over the past year?
- What areas of spirituality and life with God in community do you feel you are strong in?
- If it's hard for you to see your own strength, do you have a friend you could ask to help speak into this area of life for you?

#### Weaknesses

- Are there any areas of specific weakness you have felt knocked down by, this past year?
- Do you have a sense of where your blind spots are, in your heart or character?
- Are you aware of some of the ways in which you unintentionally hurt others?
- Have you shared your weaknesses with a trusted friend or mentor, who can help you grow?

#### Opportunities

- What unique opportunities for growth did you experience this past year?
- What current challenges are you facing that could be catalysts for growth in disguise?
- Where do you sense God moving most strongly in, around, or through you?
- What doors are currently open to you that you might be missing seeing?

#### Threats

- What potentially destructive elements or dynamics are present in your world (your interior world or the one outside of you) that threaten your spiritual health?
- What are you doing to safeguard yourself against those things?
- What is your current rhythm of spiritual practices? (daily prayer, church, worship, etc.)
- Do you have someone to share your worries, fears, concerns, etc. with? Are they good at pointing you toward Jesus, or do they simply reinforce your fears and worries?

**Sunday**

**Reflection: Highest Highs / Lowest Lows**

**Use your time in Solitude today to reflect prayerfully on the following questions:**

**What were some of the highest highs you experienced this past week?**

What made them feel like highs to you?

**What were the lowest lows you experienced this past week?**

What made them feel like lows to you?

As you process your own thoughts and emotions around these things, spend some time quietly listening for God as well, asking him to widen your perspective and understanding of both the experiences you've had, and his presence to you in them.

As you prepare to leave your solitude, commit the moments of the week ahead to God, before you even enter them. Ask for his wisdom, enlightenment, courage and love to fill your heart and guide your steps, making you ever more aware of his presence to you along the way.