

Cultivating a Life of Simplicity  
CFG Study Guide  
Week Four—Solitude  
*Be still, and know that I am God. (Ps 46:10)*

1. This month, we've discussed spiritual disciplines that can help us cultivate a life of simplicity. Prayer, meditation, worship, and now solitude. Solitude is a blessing and an opportunity all by itself. It is also an aid to the other disciplines. How can we really pray, or meditate, unless we are alone? Briefly discuss the current place of solitude in your life.

*Solitude frees us, actually. This above all explains its primacy and priority among the disciplines. Nothing but solitude can allow the development of a freedom from the ingrained behaviors that hinder our integration into God's order. In solitude we find the psychic distance, the perspective from which we can see, in the light of eternity, the created things that trap, worry, and oppress us. (Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 160.)*

2. In solitude, we flee from:
  - a. **worldly distractions** (from outside ourselves)  
i.e. "*the created things that trap, worry, and oppress us*"
  - b. **inner compulsions** (of our heart and mind)  
As you struggle to flee from worldly distractions, ask yourself: "Why is *that* so important to me? Why is *this* so hard to release? What is my heart really after in *these* things? Such questions help uncover the static in your soul.

What distractions and compulsions do you find always tagging along, nagging your mind, tugging at your heart? Write down several now:

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- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
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3. Now, most of us like the idea of "getting away from it all." But what do we get away to? What do we seek? Freedom from stress? A chance to recharge our batteries? Entertaining distraction? Are these enough?
4. What we need is *soul rest*. And we only find that when we use solitude for the right reason. Henri Nouwen says: "We enter into solitude first of all to meet our Lord and to be with him and him alone." We must flee from our distractions and compulsions, for this purpose— that we may be with Jesus, who grants us...
  - i. proper perspective
  - ii. rest in being God's child

5. Because making time for solitude is difficult—particular the kind of solitude where we have physical and mental space to meet with Jesus—we have to be deliberate about it.

*The very first thing we need to do is set apart a time and a place to be with God and him alone. The concrete shape of this discipline of solitude will be different for each person. But a real discipline never remains vague or general. It is as concrete and specific as daily life itself.* (Henri Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart—Connecting with God through Prayer, Wisdom, and Silence*, 21.)

6. So, where and when will you find solitude? What will you do in solitude?
7. In January, we spent time considering prayer, meditation, worship, and solitude. These are meant to be life-long disciplines, blessings waiting for us throughout the year. So, in February, let's try to put them into practice. Share with others in your CFG what your plan is for February, how you intend to practice these disciplines this month.
8. Early in March, ask one another in your CFG how your plan for February unfolded. This is not a guilt trip! Expect that you'll all struggle in various ways to apply these spiritual disciplines. The goal is not to "succeed" at executing your plan. The goal is spiritual growth through simplicity.

*In stark aloneness it is possible to have silence, to be still, and to know that Jehovah is indeed God (Ps 46:10), to set the Lord before our minds **with sufficient intensity and duration that we stay centered upon him—** our hearts fixed, established in trust (Ps 112:7-8)— **even when back in the office or home.*** (Willard, 162.)