

East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide:

The Spiritual Discipline of Solitude: Creating Space for God

Speaker: Pastor Keith Jenkins

Date: July 21, 2024

Introduction:

In this powerful sermon, Pastor Keith Jenkins continued the TRANSFORMED series by exploring the spiritual discipline of solitude. He emphasized that transformation is a slow, lifelong process and that Christlikeness requires intentional training through new disciplines, habits, and routines.

1. The Nature of Transformation:

Pastor Keith highlighted that spiritual transformation is a gradual process that unfolds over a lifetime, often with imperceptible changes and occasional growth spurts.

Discussion Questions:

1. How has your understanding of spiritual transformation changed over time?
2. In what ways have you experienced the slow nature of spiritual growth in your own life?

Supporting Verse:

Romans 12:2 - "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Paul was instructing the Roman church on practical Christian living.

- **Theological Significance:** This verse emphasizes the ongoing nature of transformation through the renewal of our minds.
- **Application:** We should be patient with ourselves and others in the process of spiritual growth, recognizing it as a lifelong journey.

2. The Necessity of Solitude:

Pastor Keith introduced solitude as a crucial spiritual discipline, defining it as deliberately choosing separation for the sake of refining the soul in God's presence.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you currently practice solitude in your spiritual life?
2. What challenges do you face in creating space for solitude?

Supporting Verse:

Luke 5:16 - "But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This verse describes Jesus' regular practice of seeking solitude for prayer.
- **Theological Significance:** Jesus modeled the importance of solitude in maintaining a close relationship with God.
- **Application:** We should prioritize times of solitude in our own lives, following Jesus' example.

3. The Longing for Eden:

Pastor Keith discussed how our souls long for the unbroken communion with God that was experienced in the Garden of Eden, and how solitude can help satisfy this deep desire.

Discussion Questions:

1. How have you experienced a longing for deeper communion with God?
2. In what ways has solitude helped you connect more deeply with God?

Supporting Verse:

Psalm 42:1-2 - "As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: This psalm expresses the deep longing for God's presence experienced by the psalmist.
- Theological Significance: This passage highlights the innate human desire for communion with God.
- Application: We should recognize our soul's deep longing for God and seek to satisfy it through practices like solitude.

4. Creating a Sacred Enclosure:

Pastor Keith emphasized the importance of creating a dedicated space and time for solitude with God, stressing that it requires intentional effort in our busy lives.

Discussion Questions:

1. What practical steps can you take to create a "sacred enclosure" for solitude in your life?
2. How can you communicate the importance of this practice to those close to you who might not understand?

Supporting Verse:

Matthew 6:6 - "But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Context and Reflection:

- Historical/Cultural Context: Jesus was teaching about genuine prayer practices in contrast to showy, public displays of piety.
- Theological Significance: This verse emphasizes the importance of private, intimate communion with God.
- Application: We should intentionally create private spaces for prayer and solitude in our lives.

Conclusion:

Pastor Keith Jenkins' message reminded us of the transformative power of solitude in our spiritual lives. By intentionally creating space for communion with God, we can satisfy our soul's deep longing, find restoration, and continue our journey of transformation into Christlikeness.

Reflection Questions:

1. What is one practical step you can take this week to incorporate more solitude into your life?
2. How can you use times of solitude to address the "internal noise" of worries, anxieties, and fears in your life?
3. In what ways do you hope regular solitude might transform your relationship with God and others?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the invitation to commune with you in solitude. Help us to create space in our busy lives to meet with you alone. May we find restoration for our souls and transformation of our character as we spend time in your presence. Give us the discipline to make solitude a regular practice, and the wisdom to recognize its importance in our spiritual growth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

References:

Primary Sources:

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Collaborative Contributions:

LLM Contributions: Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided sermon notes and biblical passages.

LLM Training Data:

LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to April 2024.