**Being Alone with Jesus**

**By Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Matthew 14:22-27**

**Sunday Afternoon**

**September 1, 2024**

**Matthew 14:22-27**

22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there. 24 But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

25 Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. 26 And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

**Stress is a killer, but we can’t escape it since we’re surrounded by distressing situations of all kinds**

The question is:

**How are we going to handle it?**

Many people try to escape their anxious feelings with medications, drugs, alcohol, sex, gambling, or anything that brings relief. But none of these methods are truly effective. The ultimate solution only comes from God, and He has freely provided it to every one of His children.

**Philippians 4:6-7**

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

**Jesus also experienced stress, but He knew exactly how to handle it**

Once, after feeding a multitude of five thousand, Jesus sent His disciples away in a boat and went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.

**Matthew 14:22-23**

22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. 23 And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

Saints, seeking solitude with His Father was His customary practice, especially after dramatic situations. We also see this same example in the apostle Paul’s life. After he was dramatically saved, he headed for Arabia to seek solitude with God. Time spent alone in prayer with God is vital.

**Galatians 1:15-18**

15 But then something happened! For even before I was born, God had chosen me to be his and called me-what kindness and grace- 16 to reveal his Son within me so that I could go to the Gentiles and show them the Good News about Jesus. When all this happened to me I didn't go at once and talk it over with anyone else;

17 I didn't go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. No, I went away into the deserts of Arabia and then came back to the city of Damascus.

**1. The Practice of Solitude**

Spending time alone with the Lord sets us free from stress. This kind of isolation is not the same as loneliness. Solitude is a choice to be alone, to voluntarily separate ourselves from others.

But loneliness is a painful inner emptiness that results from feeling disconnected from others. It involves a sense of not belonging and being alone in a universe of uncaring people. The purpose of solitude is to privately commune with God.

**Psalm 51:1-13**

1 Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness;

According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me. 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight--That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge.

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Make me to hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice. 9 Hide Your face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. 13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You.

Saints, sometimes the goal is not to study the Bible or bring our petitions and concerns to Him, but to simply be with the Lord. That’s when the chokehold of stress is broken, and all our tensions subside. This doesn’t mean we’ll never experience stress again, but solitude teaches us how to deal with it in God’s way when it comes.

**2. Reasons for Solitude**

The Lord wants us to be alone with Him for two primary reasons:

**For a Relationship**

God created us in His image because He wanted to have a relationship with us for all eternity (Gen. 1:26).

**Genesis 1:26**

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

Saints, no other creature on earth was given this privilege. In fact, God loved us so much that He was willing to send His Son to die for us in order to break down the barrier which sin created.

**Romans 5:7-8**

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Saints, yet despite all this, many Christians don’t have time for Him. However, we won’t be able to relate to the Lord if our minds are preoccupied, and our schedules are full. Solitude is the only way this intimate relationship with our Creator becomes a reality.

**For Preparation**

Solitude is also God’s way of preparing us for the day ahead. That’s why we should begin each morning with time alone with Him. Although reading the Word and spending time in prayer are very important, the primary purpose of solitude is to experience God’s presence. He wants to be alone with each one of us because that’s when He’s able to reveal Himself in awesome ways so we can know Him intimately and feel a sense of belonging.

**Experiencing Solitude**

How do we experience solitude?

**By opening God’s Word to focus on Him**

**Joshua 1:8**

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success”

Saints, although solitude is not synonymous with Bible study and prayer, we do need to spend a short period of time reading the Word so our thinking will be God oriented. This is not the time to focus on our needs and prayer requests. The point is to become more sensitive to the Lord’s presence.

**Psalm 16:11**

“You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

**By Eliminating Distractions**

**2 Corinthians 10:4-6**

4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

To prevent our minds from drifting, we need to find a quiet place that is free from distractions. The goal is to be still and quiet so we can give the Lord our undivided attention. As we enjoy sweet fellowship with Him, all our worries, fears, and stress drain away, and we’re strengthened to handle whatever comes.

**Benefits of Solitude**

**(Benefits of Solitude)**

Saints, if we practice solitude, our lives will be changed in the following ways:

**1. Makes our Busy Days More Fruitful**

If we begin each day with the Lord, setting our minds and hearts on Him and listening for His voice, He’ll guide us and make whatever we do more productive in service to Him.

**Colossians 1:10**

“that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God”

**2. Repairs Damage**

After a hard day, when we just can’t handle any more, a time of solitude with the Lord refuels us emotionally. All the troubles and anxieties are released, and we come away liberated and refreshed.

**Acts 3:19**

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord”

**3. Equips us to Face the Tough Days**

Time alone with the Lord enables us to face the trials, heartaches, and burdens of difficult days with calm confidence and assurance of His presence with us.

**4. Creates Surprising Moments**

When we meet quietly with the Lord, He may unexpectedly answer our prayers in surprising ways and reveal even more than we ask.

**5. Strips us of Pride**

In God’s presence we begin to recognize His holiness, perfection, and power, and as a result, understand how lowly we are in comparison.

**6. Protects Health**

Stress affects our bodies and damages our health, but solitude with the Lord releases our anxiety so we don’t have to suffer its harmful effects.

**7. Makes a Difference in Relationships**

When we’ve released our stress to the Lord, our relationships with others improve.

**8. Gives Peace and Joy**

Times of solitude with God can calm our hearts, quiet our spirits, and enable us to overcome anything we’re facing in life.

**9. Gives Greater Strength from the Lord**

He enables us to handle each day’s challenges.

**10. Produces Greater Trust in God**

We rest in the knowledge that our heavenly Father will take care of us.

**11. Develops a Deeper Relationship with the Lord**

In those quiet times, we learn to know Him more intimately

**In Closing:**

**1. How do you normally handle stress in your life?**

**2. In what way is solitude different from another form of stress relief you’ve experienced?**

**3. Have you ever practiced solitude with God as a solution to stress?**

**4. What benefits have become evident from your practice of solitude?**

**5. Would you recommend it to others who are dealing with stress?**

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace." '**