
SILENCE & SOLITUDE

Practicing The Way - "Abiding"

We are so accustomed to hurry and distraction that we rarely take a barometer reading on the state of our inner life until we crash. Committing to a consistent time and place helps us consistently check in with Jesus so that we can listen, make course corrections, receive his loving presence and enter each day "abiding" in him.

.From: <https://practicingtheway.org/silence-solitude/week-one>

1. Identify a time/place that works well for you

Time: For most people, first thing in the morning works best. You're rested, fresh, and the day is young. For others, a more optimal time slot is when kids are napping in the late morning, or on a lunch break, after work, or before you go to bed. Feel free to experiment until you find the right fit.

Place: Find a place that is quiet and as distraction free as possible. A comfortable chair with a blanket and candle nearby works well for a lot of people. Weather permitting, a park or nature reserve are also a good bet.

2. Set a modest goal

Beginners: It's better to start small and work your way up. We recommend you start with ten minutes, 3-5 days a week.

Intermediate: If you already practice silence and solitude a few times a week, consider upping it to every day.

Advanced: If you already practice silence and solitude daily, consider upping your time (to, say, an hour), or just giving your time a high level of focus.

Then, for the practice...

1. Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable

- For most people, sitting with your back straight, shoulders relaxed, legs on the floor is a good start. Others do better lying on their back in a relaxed position.
- Some of you may prefer to do this exercise while walking or doing something simple with your hands, like laundry or drawing.

2. Begin with a breathing prayer

- Close your eyes.
- Take long, deep, slow breaths (if you want, count 4 seconds in, 4 seconds wait, 4 seconds out, repeat). Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth.
- Start to pay attention to your breathing. Just “watch” your breath go in and out.
- Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes, and just focus on your breathing.
- Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to do’s, and distractions. That’s okay. Don’t judge yourself, feel bad, give up, or worry. When you notice your mind start to wander, just recenter with a quick prayer, like, “Father...” and come back to your breathing.
- In the beginning, just 1-2 minutes of this is a huge win, and 10 minutes is a home run.

3. Spend a few minutes “abiding in the vine”

- Transition from your breathing prayer to “the practice of the presence of God.”
- Notice God’s presence all around you, in you. For some people it’s helpful to imagine the Father is sitting in the chair across from you or on a throne.
- Welcome his love, joy, and peace from the Holy Spirit.
- If you want, open your mind and imagination to listen for God’s voice, or get something off your chest in prayer.
- But the main goal here is simply to “be with Jesus.” Don’t feel like you have to “do” anything. Just relax and enjoy his presence.

4. Close in a prayer of gratitude and commit the rest of your day to the Father