

**Sermon Text: Exodus 14; Psalm 37; Colossians 2**

**Sermon Notes:**

## **Community Group:**

**Location:**

**Date:**

**Prayer Requests:**

**Lesson Topic:**

**Scripture References:**

**Lesson Notes:**

**What will I do as a result of our study?**

## Solitude—Following Jesus' Example

### Questions for Reflection:

Read Mark 1:35-38. Where was Jesus when the disciples were looking for him? Why had he gone there?

After returning from His time of Solitude, what did Jesus do?

Were there other times when Jesus would get away to be alone with God? (c.f. Mark 3:7, 13; 6:31-32; 6:45-46)

If this was important for Jesus' relationship with God the Father, how important is it for our relationship with Him?

Read "**Appendix 8: Practice of Silence & Solitude**" and "**Appendix 9: Lectio Divina.**" Using the suggested Bible reading, complete the *lectio divina* practice on the next page.

***Lectio Divina:***

**Title:**

**Date:**

**Bible Reading:        John 15:4-11**

**Read (*Lectio*)**

**Reflect (*Meditatio*)**

**Respond (*Oratio*)**

**Rest (*Contemplatio*) & Resolve (*Incarnatio*)**

*Lectio Divina*—Reading for Transformation

Questions for Reflection:

What do the following passages say about the transforming power of God and His Word in our lives?

Romans 8:29—

Romans 12:1-2—

2 Corinthians 4:16—

Colossians 3:1-10—

Glance over “**Appendix 8: Practice of Silence & Solitude**” and “**Appendix 9: Lectio Divina**” again. Using the suggested Bible reading, complete the *lectio divina* practice on the next page.

***Lectio Divina:***

**Title:**

**Date:**

**Bible Reading:**      **1 John 2:1-6**

**Read (*Lectio*)**

**Reflect (*Meditatio*)**

**Respond (*Oratio*)**

**Rest (*Contemplatio*) & Resolve (*Incarnatio*)**

*Lectio Divina*—Balancing Silence & the Word

Questions for Reflection:

What do the following passages say about the transforming power of God and His Word in our lives?

2 Timothy 3:10-17—

Hebrews 4:11-13—

2 Peter 1:3-11—

Glance over “**Appendix 8: Practice of Silence & Solitude**” and “**Appendix 9: Lectio Divina**” again. Using the suggested Bible reading, complete the *lectio divina* practice on the next page.

***Lectio Divina:***

**Title:**

**Date:**

**Bible Reading:        John 8:31-38**

**Read (*Lectio*)**

**Reflect (*Meditatio*)**

**Respond (*Oratio*)**

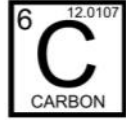
**Rest (*Contemplatio*) & Resolve (*Incarnatio*)**



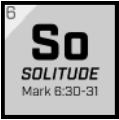
## Appendix 8:

# PRACTICE OF SILENCE & SOLITUDE

If pressed to pinpoint a single element that is the most important element for the existence of life on our planet, scientists would single out the sixth element—Carbon. Carbon is the main element in organic compounds, so carbon is essential to life on Earth. Without carbon, life as we know it could not exist.



Likewise, the sixth essential element of life in Christ is the most important element for our spiritual lives. Without this element compounded with other essential elements, we will not be able to grow and mature in our spiritual walks. What is this element that holds all the others together? That element is **solitude**.



*Solitude is a place. It is a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone, a time when we unplug and withdraw from the noise of interpersonal interactions, from the noise, busyness and constant stimulation associated with life in the company of others. Solitude can also be associated with a physical place that has been set apart for times alone with God, a place that is not cluttered with work, noise, technology, other relationships, or any of those things that call us back into doing mode. Most important, solitude is a place inside myself where God's Spirit and my spirit dwell together in union.*

Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*

Silence and solitude go hand-in-hand. In the frenetic culture that we live in today, it is impossible to experience silence without solitude. And considering the chaos that is ongoing in our minds, real solitude is impossible without also experiencing silence. At this point in our study, we have examined five essential elements of life in Christ—prayer, Bible study, community, worship and service. The first two disciplines—prayer and Bible study—are inwardly focused. Community and service are outwardly focused. Worship can be both. But as we consider these disciplines that

focus on our inner being, we must acknowledge that they are most effective when practiced in silence and solitude.

“The first 1500 years of church history were characterized by the practice of *Lectio Divina* [or divine reading]. Since many people were illiterate and many that could read didn’t have Bibles, *lectio divina* offered a way of attending to Scripture as it was read in church, with an ear to hearing a word from God... [This type of] reading of Scripture is rooted in the assurance that every part of the biblical story—letters, parables, Gospels, Prophets, history—is inspired and can give voice to God’s particular word to us.”

Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*

By this point in time, you are well-acquainted with SOAP journaling and the inductive Bible study process (observation, interpretation and application). The practice of *lectio divina* builds on these concepts and carries it one step further. As Paul explained to Timothy, it is essential that we learn to rightly handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15); but **unless we internalize that truth, we are only studying for information rather than transformation.**

*When we engage the Scriptures for spiritual transformation, we make it our top priority to listen to God relationally rather than seeking only to learn more about God cognitively... Like the little boy Samuel, we approach the Scripture with utter openness and availability to God: “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:9).*

Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*

So beyond asking the inductive questions of: *What does it say? What does it mean? And what does it mean to me?*—the *lectio divina* process encourages you to ask questions like:

- *How do I feel about what I’ve read?*
- *Is there something there that really resonates with me?*
- *Is there something there that I am struggling with or resisting?*
- *Why do I feel this way?*
- *Is this God trying to address an issue in my spiritual walk?*

In a nutshell, *lectio divina* is a process of balancing a steady diet of God’s Word with silent reflection to allow His word to speak to my heart. We cannot forget Hebrews 4:12—“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.” Nor can we forget that Scripture has commanded us to love God “with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). Notice that we are to love Him with our heart and soul first—and then with all of our mind!

## **BEYOND INDUCTIVE STUDY – BALANCING SILENCE AND THE WORD**

People do not know how to deal with silence! This is evidenced by the fact that there are 460 results for “noise machines” on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). These are machines that are supposed to relax you and help you sleep. Since silence is a foreign concept to most of us, I believe it is necessary to explain a method to help block out the world’s noise.

The method is simply a focused breathing technique. There are many different ways of doing this. For simplicity, I will just share the way that works best for me. Just follow these easy steps:

**Step 1:** Close your eyes and sit comfortably.

**Step 2:** Breathe in deeply through your nose for 4 seconds.

**Step 3:** Hold your breath for 4 seconds.

**Step 4:** Breathe out through your mouth for 8-10 seconds.

**Step 5:** Repeat.

In order to get your mind focused on spending time with the Lord, I would encourage you to pray Scripture as you are going through this process. Some excellent options include: Joshua 1:8a; Psalm 119:18; Luke 17:13; Colossians 1:9b; and many more! I utilize the passage from Psalm 119 most often as I am practicing focused breathing as a way to prepare my heart for studying God’s Word.

I want to challenge you to give silence and solitude a try! It has the potential to transform your life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Check out “**Appendix 9: Lectio Divina**” to help you navigate the process.

## Appendix 9:

# LECTIO DIVINA

Here is a brief outline of the *lectio divina* process. As mentioned before, *lectio divina* is an attempt to balance silence and the Word. Before you begin, choose a passage of Scripture that you would like to focus on. The passage should not be more than 6-8 verses in length.

Once you have your Bible ready, begin with a time of silence. There is no specific timeframe here, but it should be long enough to clear your mind of the “world’s noise” so you can focus on your time with God. Each time you read your passage, read it aloud and read it slowly so that the Holy Spirit has time to speak to your heart in the process. You will need a journal to be able to record the things that God reveals to you through this process. God bless you as you seek Him!

### **Silence**

Focused breathing while praying Psalm 119:18.

### **First Reading – Read (*Lectio*)**

Looking for God’s Word for me from His Word.

### **Silence**

Focused breathing while thinking about God’s word for me.

### **Second Reading – Reflect (*Meditatio*)**

Why is this God’s Word for me today?

### **Silence**

### **Third Reading – Respond (*Oratio*)**

How will I respond to God’s Word for me today?

### **Silence**

### **Fourth Reading – Rest (*Contemplatio*) & Resolve (*Incarnatio*)**

Resolving to abide in and obey His Word for me today.