

Soul Care

SESSION #2: Sunlight for your Soul

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling, and doing.

MAIN IDEA: To learn to be with God, we need times of silence and solitude.

HEAD CHANGE: To know that the habit of silence and solitude takes practice, but the effects on your internal and external life will be worth it.

HEART CHANGE: To feel grateful that, with Jesus' help, it's possible to adopt rhythms of quiet in a noisy world.

LIFE CHANGE: To establish a cue, a routine, and a reward for the keystone habit of silence and solitude.

CONNECT

Describe the season of your life when you felt busiest – pushed to the limits of your available time, energy, and emotional resources. (You may be in that season now!) What was the effect of that frenetic period on your relationship with God and others?

Are you more uncomfortable with a noisy environment, or with absolute silence?

Most of us live lives that are entirely too full of noise and activity and obligations – too many spinning plates. In this session, Jason points to the rhythm Jesus modelled of drawing away to a place of silence and solitude, where He would recalibrate in the presence of His Father. He calls us to do the same.

LEARN

As you watch, write down how Jason answers these questions.

1. What does Jesus promise to those who are weary and burdened?
2. What kind of 'noise' filled Jesus' life on earth?
3. What does 'eremos' mean?
4. What are the three steps for creating a keystone habit?

Show SESSION #2: Sunlight for your Soul (12 minutes)

REVIEW

In the last session, we learned that if we want to live out the lessons Jesus taught, we must adopt the lifestyle He lived. **Do you feel trapped in a lifestyle of tremendous pace and pressure, rendering attempts at emulating Jesus' lifestyle impossible? Do you long for more peace, joy, contentment, or love? What robs you of these things in your current circumstances?**

Jesus knew we'd face overwhelm and weariness. **What has His invitation in Matthew 11:28–30 meant to you personally? Is there someone in your life who desperately needs to hear this invitation?**

Jason points out that Jesus knew life would make us weary. Jesus Himself faced the stress of noise, distraction, and busyness. Pharisees complained and deceived and laid traps. Crowds pushed and shoved and begged. His disciples argued and hustled and misunderstood Him. **Have you had similar demands placed on you, physically or emotionally, in the past 24 hours? How did you deal with them?**

Jesus created and modelled a rhythm for us that would enable us to find rest and reconnection with Him. He would sneak away from the craziness to what He called the eremos – a Greek word meaning a quiet or isolated place. It was this habit of silence and solitude that allowed Him to be with His Father, and that equipped and empowered Him once more to do His Father's work. **Do you tend to fill every waking moment of a day? Do you feel every waking moment gets filled for you, without your consent or control? How would it change your emotional and spiritual wellbeing if there were quiet spaces in your schedule during which you could remind yourself of God's love for you and His powerful presence in your life?**

Jesus modelled the habit of silence and solitude on His very first day of ministry (Mark 1:35). After healing, teaching, driving out demons, and meeting various other needs, Jesus got up while it was still dark and went off to a solitary place to pray. **In your experience and observation, do people tend to wait until they are burnt out before they opt for the rest and restoration of silence and solitude? If so, what difference might it make to people's ministries and careers if they practised silence and solitude before they were on the verge of collapse?**

In the last session we explored the idea that keystone habits impact every area of life. Charles Duhigg suggests there are three necessary steps to form any habit: a cue, a routine, and a reward. So, to establish silence and solitude as a keystone habit, it will be helpful to choose a regular time and place (cue and routine), so you can begin to enjoy the reward of time in God's presence. **Do you enjoy time alone inside or outside? Considering your temperament, season of life, and current commitments, when could you intentionally carve out regular time in your day for silence and solitude – early morning, lunchtime, mid-afternoon?**

Jason describes the reward of a habit of silence and solitude as delighting in God's love for you. **What do you most appreciate about how God has revealed His great love to you? Are you particularly grateful for His comfort, grace, sovereignty, justice, forgiveness, or abundant life, for example? What word or phrase might you focus on or repeat, to remind you of God's love and bring your thoughts back to Him?**

Jason encourages us to start slowly as we practise this habit. Don't beat yourself up if you can't meditate on God's greatness silently for two hours. Try 30 seconds. Try walking. Try sitting still. Jason says, 'It's not about perfection; it's about His presence... We are worshiping the presence of Jesus, not the practice of silence.' **Do you tend to compare your spiritual practices to others'? Does the thought of seeking out time alone with God scare you, bore you, excite you, or intrigue you?**

You might think of silence and solitude doing to your soul what sunshine does to a garden. You don't see the immediate effects of photosynthesis on leaves, and you may not see the immediate effects of silence and solitude on your inner life. But the miraculous exchange of nutrients needed for growth is taking place, and in time, the change and development will be undeniable. **If you're already in the habit of practising silence and solitude, what effects on your internal life have you experienced? Has there been a ripple effect extending to your external life – your work, relationships, community involvement, or leisure?**

Jason explains that silence and solitude isn't about hiding away from society like a hermit. What we do in the big wide world for Jesus is incredibly important. But being with Jesus is greater than doing for Jesus. **Do you agree? Why or why not?**

BIBLE EXPLORATION

Luke 5:16 is another gospel account of Jesus' habit of silence and solitude. It reads, 'But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.' Of course, Jesus could have prayed anywhere, and so can we. **What are the advantages of withdrawing to lonely places to pray – as opposed to praying in a crowd, or on a train, or even in church? Where do you find it easiest to pray?**

1 Kings 19 tells the story of God drawing Elijah into a time of silence and solitude. **How did Elijah expect to hear God? How did he actually hear Him?**

The Psalms are full of invitations to praise God with raucous, joyful songs, and to lament out loud to God. **Read Psalm 46:10 and Psalm 62:5. How does the psalmist also incorporate the spiritual practice of silence and solitude? What is the effect of his silence and solitude on his spiritual and emotional wellbeing?**

REFLECT

Before we move on to the next session, take a moment to remind yourself that your silence and solitude 'muscles' will strengthen over time. Just keep taking the next right step towards developing this soul-feeding habit in your life. As Mother Teresa said, 'We all must take the time to be silent and to contemplate... for it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. God is the friend of silence – we need to listen to God because it's not what we say but what He says to us and through us that matters.'

BEFORE NEXT TIME

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

READ: In Mark 6:31, Jesus says to His followers, 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile.' What is Jesus saying to you, with these words? Use them as a prompt to enter a time of silence and solitude, even for just a few minutes. Breathe deeply, and rest awhile.

WRITE: Write down your fears or misgivings or any awkwardness you feel about silence or solitude and surrender them to God. Or write down possible cues, routines, and rewards you could implement to kickstart this habit in your life.

PRAY: Ask God to guide you as you practise silence and solitude. Ask Him for courage, resolve, time management skills, and creative ideas of ways to draw aside from the busyness of life to meet with Him.