

Suggestions for Solitude with Jesus

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Prepare. Bring to your solitude whatever will help you to *be with Jesus in a personal, interactive way*. Probably you'll want your Bible, journal, and pen. If you'll be outside you may need walking shoes, a chair, sun protection, jacket or blanket, and water. You may need a lunch or snacks or you might choose to fast. Also you could bring art supplies, a favorite devotional book, a musical instrument, or a worship CD.

Unplug. Plan to set aside a *time* and *space* for Jesus in which you won't be interrupted by other people, cell phones, e-mails, media, loud noises, etc. (You may need to make arrangements with family members or others.) You might go to a secluded nature spot or a quiet room.

Do nothing. Begin your solitude by doing nothing for at least thirty minutes. Just *be with Jesus in the silence with no agenda*. This will probably be difficult! It might help to take a prayer walk. You are training your body and soul to listen to the word of the Lord: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). With practice you can live your daily life in Jesus' easy yoke (Matt 11:25-30), free of hurry, worry, and selfish ambition.

Let go. You may be hoping to have a special time with God, hear a message from him, or to accomplish something important -- release your desires to the Lord. You may be anxious about your work, a loved one, or a personal matter -- put each concern into the Father's hands. Ask Jesus to lead you in this this time and then *be open to whatever he has for you, trusting that it is good even if it doesn't feel good*. You may feel refreshed by God or distress may surface. You may be encouraged or challenged.

Rest. *What would you enjoy doing with Jesus?* He is your best friend and he likes being with you! Probably you don't want to do a major Bible study or lots of reading. Set aside any concerns for loved ones or your ministry until the last part of your solitude. Instead of trying to accomplish projects, simply pray from your heart, perhaps meditating on a Psalm or Gospel story. If you're tired you may need to take a nap. Go ahead -- *Jesus took naps!* This will help you to be refreshed and attentive to God.

Re-focus. In prayer everyone struggles with distracting thoughts -- don't feel bad about it. When your mind wanders offer the distraction to God or replace it with a prayer. Give thanks and praise to God or meditate on Scripture. It may help you to gently repeat phrase from the Bible, possibly breathing the words in and out as a Breath Prayer.

Open up. What's been going on in your life lately? How are you feeling? Talk to God about your experiences and needs. You may want to journal your prayers and what God seems to be saying to you.