



**The Week of February 13, 2022**  
**God Is... Compassionate & Gracious**  
**Conversation Guide**

**This Week's Take-Aways**

- **About God:** (1 Corinthians 8:6) I believe there is one God who exists in 3 persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is perfect in all things. He is the creator of all things. He has made humanity in his image and he desires a personal relationship with each one of us.
- **I show great compassion:** (Psalm 82:3-4) I actively show my caring for those who are vulnerable in real and tangible ways.
- **Intro Questions:**
  - What image comes to mind when you think of God? Is it Morgan Freeman? The Sistine Chapel?
    - Do you think of God as a stern disciplinarian or a loving father?
  - How does the image of God in the Old Testament differ from the image of God that we see through Jesus in the New Testament?
  - **Optional:** Play the RightNow videos to introduce the series and the concept of Compassion. In RightNow browse for "Character of God." The first video is an overview of Exodus 34:6-7 (6 minutes) and the second video is on God's Compassion (5 minutes).

## The Context

Have someone read out loud this passage: Exodus 32:1-9

*When the people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said to him, "Come, make gods for us who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt – we don't know what has happened to him!"*

*Aaron replied to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters and bring them to me." So all the people took off the gold rings that were on their ears and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from them, fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made it into an image of a calf.*

*Then they said, "Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!"*

*When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of it and made an announcement: "There will be a festival to the Lord tomorrow." Early the next morning they arose, offered burnt offerings, and presented fellowship offerings. The people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party.*

*The Lord spoke to Moses: "Go down at once! For your people you brought up from the land of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned from the way I commanded them; they have made for themselves an image of a calf. They have bowed down to it, sacrificed to it, and said, 'Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.'" The Lord also said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and they are indeed a stiff-necked people."*

- What were the people doing in this passage?
- What was Moses doing while they were doing it?
- Which of the Lord's commandments were they breaking?

Have someone read out loud this passage: Exodus 33:13–23 (NLT)

*If it is true that you look favorably on me, let me know your ways so I may understand you more fully and continue to enjoy your favor. And remember that this nation is your very own people."*

*The Lord replied, "I will personally go with you, Moses, and I will give you rest—everything will be fine for you."*

*Then Moses said, "If you don't personally go with us, don't make us leave this place. 16 How will anyone know that you look favorably on me—on me and on your people—if you don't go with us? For your presence among us sets your people and me apart from all other people on the earth."*

*The Lord replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for I look favorably on you, and I know you by name."*

*Moses responded, "Then show me your glorious presence."*

*The Lord replied, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose. But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live." The Lord continued, "Look, stand near me on this rock. As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen."*

- What was Moses' greatest desires?
- How do we see God's compassion shown to Moses in this passage?
- What is the most glorious experience you've ever had? What has left you in awe?
  - How long did that sense of awe last?
  - How do you think that moment would compare to seeing the glory of God?
  - What does the "glory of God" mean to you?

## The Character of God

Have someone read out loud this passage: Exodus 34:1–7 (NLT)

*Then the Lord told Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed. Be ready in the morning to climb up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me on the top of the mountain. No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is to appear anywhere on the mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain."*

*So Moses chiseled out two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the Lord had commanded him, and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands.*

*Then the Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out,*

*"Yahweh! The Lord!*

*The God of compassion and mercy!*

*I am slow to anger*

*and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.*

*I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.*

*I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.*

*But I do not excuse the guilty.*

*I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren;*

*the entire family is affected—*

*even children in the third and fourth generations."*

- How did the Lord declare Himself to Moses?
- How does this declaration form the foundation of sound, biblical theology?
- How would you explain lavish, unfailing love?
- How does God compassion differ from our compassion?
- How does this compare to your perceptions of God that you discussed in today's Intro Questions?
- We'll be looking at all of these verses over the next few weeks- don't worry if it's confusing!

Have someone read out loud this passage: Exodus 34:29-35

*As Moses descended from Mount Sinai – with the two tablets of the testimony in his hands as he descended the mountain – he did not realize that the skin of his face shone as a result of his speaking with the Lord. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face shone! They were afraid to come near him.*

*But Moses called out to them, so Aaron and all the leaders of the community returned to him, and Moses spoke to them. Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he commanded them to do everything the Lord had told him on Mount Sinai. When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face. But whenever Moses went before the Lord to speak with him, he would remove the veil until he came out. After he came out, he would tell the Israelites what he had been commanded, and the Israelites would see that Moses's face was radiant. Then Moses would put the veil over his face again until he went to speak with the Lord.*

- How was Moses physically changed by his encounter with God?
- Have you been changed by your encounters with God?

## Character of God in the Old Testament

Have someone read out loud these passages:

Isaiah 30:18

*'Therefore the Lord is waiting to show you mercy, and is rising up to show you compassion, for the Lord is a just God. All who wait patiently for him are happy.'*

Psalms 78:38

*Yet he was compassionate;  
he atoned for their iniquity  
and did not destroy them.  
He often turned his anger aside  
and did not unleash all his wrath.*

Psalms 86:15

*But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,  
slow to anger and abounding in faithful love and truth.*

Psalms 103:7–14

*He revealed his ways to Moses,  
his deeds to the people of Israel.  
The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in faithful love.  
He will not always accuse us*

*or be angry forever.  
He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve  
or repaid us according to our iniquities.  
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his faithful love  
toward those who fear him.  
As far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.  
As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.  
For he knows what we are made of,  
remembering that we are dust.*

#### Psalm 145:8–9

*The Lord is gracious and compassionate,  
slow to anger and great in faithful love.  
The Lord is good to everyone;  
his compassion rests on all he has made.*

- What does it mean that this same group of phrases is used to describe God throughout the Old Testament scriptures?

## Character of God in the New Testament

Have someone read out loud these passages:

#### Ephesians 5:1

*Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children,*

#### 1 John 2:6

*The one who says he remains in him should walk just as he walked.*

#### 1 Peter 2:21

*For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.*

#### Luke 6:35–36

*“But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High. For he is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”*



## Galatians 2:20

*I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

- Throughout the Bible we are called to be like God. What are some practical ways we can be imitators of God?
- Can we be truly and always compassionate and gracious on our own?
  - How do we equip ourselves to be compassionate and gracious even when we don't feel like it?
- What steps did Jesus give us to equip ourselves to be like Him?

## Next Steps

- Read through the Silence & Solitude information and follow the steps given.
- Think of one specific person that you can show compassion and graciousness to this week. Be ready to share how you did next week!

# Silence and Solitude

## Knowing God

John 17:3

*This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God,*

Psalms 46:10 (Amplified Bible Classic)

*Let be and be still, and know (recognize and understand) that I am God.*

God created us to be in relationship with Him and know Him for Who He is. Adam and Eve had fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden in ways that is hard for us to comprehend. The first Adam through an act of disobedience severed that relationship with a holy God. The second Adam, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:12-20), restored that relationship between us and God as only He could (John 14:6). Although salvation begins in the moment that we truly believe in Jesus and commit our lives to Him, working out that salvation is a journey of a lifetime of learning to walk with God and knowing Him more and more (Philippians 2:12).

To accomplish this, Christians have engaged in activities that were modeled by Jesus and the early church to help us grow spiritually. Being children of the first Adam through our first birth, we are trapped in patterns of this world that steer us away from God and His ways. Through our second birth, we work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to develop new patterns of responding that draws us into a deeper relationship with God and the ability to live out the commands of Christ (Philippians 2:13, Romans 12:2).

These new patterns of life are called spiritual disciplines. A definition of discipline is "any activity within our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort." For example, an old pattern you may still respond with is inappropriate anger. If you try to change it

merely by your own willpower or good intentions, it will last about 72 hours and then you will be back to your old ways! If you instead use appropriate spiritual disciplines, you can have the reaction of grace, prayer and kindness that Jesus says will be reflective of a kingdom person (Matthew 5:43-48).

There are two types of spiritual disciplines that are practiced: Engagement and Abstinence. Some common types of abstinence: solitude, silence, fasting, frugality, chastity, and secrecy. Some common types of engagement: Bible study, worship, celebration, service, prayer, fellowship, and confession. Solitude and silence are foundational disciplines for all the other disciplines and are desperately needed in our hectic, frenetic lives.

## What is Solitude?

We purposefully abstain from interaction with other human beings, denying ourselves companionship and all that comes from our conscious interaction with others. Though often unaware of it, we have a need for solitude and silence. Jesus calls us from loneliness to solitude. Loneliness is inner emptiness and often the fear of it drives to noise and crowds. However, solitude is inner fulfillment, a state of mind and heart, and not a place necessarily but a portable sanctuary of the heart.

*Let him who cannot be alone beware of community....  
Let him who is not in community beware of being alone....  
Each by itself has profound pitfalls and perils."*  
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## What is Silence?

We close off our souls from "sounds," whether those sounds be noise, music, or words. Silence is hard for us to do because it makes us feel helpless. Who is going to speak up for us if we do not? How are we going to make others do what we want them to do unless we tell them until they do it? How are others going to know how to interpret my actions unless I tell them what I meant by what I did? Silence is intimately related to trust! Can you really trust God is in control and give up your control? As James warns us to cease the flow of words: "If anyone thinks he is religious without controlling his tongue, then his religion is useless and he deceives himself." (1:26)

*"Real Silence, real stillness, really holding one's tongue  
comes only as the sober consequence of spiritual stillness."*  
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

## Steps to Take

1. Little moments of solitude to begin and during our day. Start small and build incrementally. See the following journal for a suggested plan if you are just starting out.
2. Find or develop a "quiet place" to separate yourself from distractions. You need to eliminate what may visually or audibly may keep you from focusing on God and His word.

Practically speaking, that means you need to be alone, put your phone on “airplane mode,” turn off sources of sounds or alerts and, when able, shut the door.

3. Monthly, quarterly, or annually, it is powerful in the life of the follower of Christ to have a personal retreat. Start with 3-4 hours at a place where you can get away in nature or a retreat like setting to spend time uninterrupted. Combining with prayer and meditating on truths from the Bible, bask in His loving presence attune to whatever He is telling you in His “quiet whisper.” (1 Kings 19)

*“It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers.*

*The more solitary I am the more affection I have for them....*

*Solitude and silence teach me to love my brothers for what they are, not for what they say.”*

-Thomas Merton

- On RightNow Media search for the “Being Challenge” for teaching on engaging in the spiritual disciplines that Jesus modeled. Session 5 is on Solitude. Also, search for “Be Still” for a complete study on the topic. If you don’t have an account, go to the church website ([icelebration.org](http://icelebration.org)) Choose “Watch” from the top menu and then scroll down to the RightNow sign-up section.
- Dr. Donald S. Whitney – “Should I practice silence and solitude”: [youtu.be/cx9Oe3W4A6M](https://youtu.be/cx9Oe3W4A6M)
- Doable Discipleship: Silence and Solitude YouTube video/podcast: [youtu.be/pUpmMQW5Xpw](https://youtu.be/pUpmMQW5Xpw)
- Article from Curate ministries: [curateministries.org/curateblog/2020/1/9/silence-and-solitude](https://curateministries.org/curateblog/2020/1/9/silence-and-solitude)
- Article from Outreach magazine: [outreachmagazine.com/features/discipleship/32086-8-benefits-silence-solitude-leaders-life.html](https://outreachmagazine.com/features/discipleship/32086-8-benefits-silence-solitude-leaders-life.html)

## How To Begin A Daily Quiet Time To Practice Silence And Solitude

### 1. Select A Specific Time

The best time to have a quiet time is when I am at my best to spend time alone with God. Many believers find that an early morning quiet time works best. Examples from the Bible include Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Hannah, Job, Hezekiah, David, Daniel, Jesus, etc. It seems logical to begin the day with it. “The best time to tune your instruments is before you play the concert, not after!” It demonstrates that meeting with God is your first priority. You give Him the first part of your day. Whatever time you set, make it a priority, and persevere because eventually you will face opposition and obstacles. Be ready to restart and continue. Remember, it takes 21 days to make it a habit.

How long should it be? If this is new to you, start with 3 minutes and let it double weekly. But do not watch the clock. Emphasize quality, not quantity.

### 2. Choose A Special Place

Jesus’ practice is clear in what he modeled and practiced. “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35 NIV) “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:6 NIV). Whether it be a room you can be alone in at your house, your back porch, or an office before other employees arrive, seek that special place.



### **3. Have A Plan**

For the practice of silence and solitude, you will want to quietly meditate on Biblical passages, pray quietly to God and just sit in silence in His presence. Prepare for your time in advance by having appropriate Bible passages in print or electronically to meditate on. The current messages on God's character will be a great source to think about God in deeper ways (see the weekly Conversation Guide on the App or website). A notebook or pad to write down what the Lord speaks to you about, add to your prayer list or jot down things that come to mind that you need to deal with later.