



**The Week of March 6, 2022**  
**God Is... Forgiving**  
**Conversation Guide**

**This Week's Take-Aways**

- **About Eternity:** (John 14:1-4) I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.
- **About Humanity:** (John 3:16) I believe all people are fallen in sin, but loved by God who has taken the initiative to save humanity from its sinfulness.
- **I place God's priorities above my own:** (Matthew 6:33) I will place God's priorities as described in the Bible ahead of my own.

**How did it go with last week's Next Steps?**

- Were you able to forgive that person you thought of last week?
- Were you able to follow Jesus's words in Matthew 5:23-24 and seek to make things right with another last week?

**Intro Questions:**

- Who is your favorite on TV judge and why?
- Is our judicial system just?
- What is God's standard by which He judges? How does that differ from man's standard?
- Does God judge perfectly?
- How does that compare with man's judgment?

Have someone read out loud Exodus 34:7

*maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation.*

- How is God judging righteously when He does not allow the guilty to go unpunished and allowing the consequences to impact generations?
- How does that work with His forgiveness of iniquity, rebellion and sin?

## God's Judgment

Have someone read out loud these verses:

John 3:18

*Anyone who believes in him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.*

Romans 8:1-2

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

Hebrews 9:27

*And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment—*

2 Corinthians 5:10

*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may be repaid for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.*

- Who is the Mediator between sinful man and a holy God?
- When do we become condemned?
- What is our condemnation?
- When do we escape that condemnation?
- What happens at the Judgment seat of Christ?

## Responding to a Righteous Judge

Have someone read out loud these verses:

Romans 2:1–5

*Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things. Now we know that God's judgment on those who do such things is based on the truth. Do you think—anyone of you who judges those who do such things yet do the same—that you will escape God's judgment? Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance? Because of your hardened and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath, when God's righteous judgment is revealed.*

Romans 14:12

*So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

1 Corinthians 3:11-15

*For no one can lay any foundation other than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become obvious. For the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will experience loss, but he himself will be saved—but only as through fire.*

Romans 6:23

*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

John 8:24

*Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins."*

- Before we receive the righteousness of Christ through salvation, what will be the consequence of our sin?
- As a believer in Jesus Christ and giving our lives to Him, what is our gift from God?
- Even as a believer we will face judgment for how we lived our lives. In the 1 Corinthians 3 passage how does Paul explain it?

## Next Steps

- Memorize and meditate on Romans 8:1-2. Contemplate who you are in Christ Jesus and the freedom He has given you. Find another believer to encourage with this truth.
- Make two columns. One entitle "Gold, silver & costly stones." The other entitle "Wood, hay & straw." As you think about your week list the activities of eternal and spiritual value in the first column. In the second column list the activities that do not.
- Continue practicing silence and solitude or start if you haven't. Read the resources below to learn more.

# 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.