

SOLITUDE

Slowing • Silence • Listening

Are you feeling ...

***A desire to be with God? In need of quiet?
Overwhelmed and busy? Guilty about resting?***

WHAT IS SOLITUDE?

The practice of solitude means to get away from everyone for a while to a place free of distractions so that the individual can be alone with God, to wait and listen deeply for God's still, small voice. Our lives tend to be too busy. It's when we cut out the noise in our daily lives that we can begin to find our true selves in God. Solitude reveals to us that being fully present with God actually helps to bring perspective to our "to do" list.

As Salvationists we are good at doing and not so good at being. It is better when we have a balance between these two, and solitude helps us to do that. When we are caught up with God we learn that it's okay to stop and just be in God's presence. As Ruth Haley Barton writes in her book, *Sacred Rhythms*, "Solitude becomes a place of rest for us rather than another place for human striving and hard work." We read in the Gospels that Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (see Luke 5:16). Through this he was able to remain connected to his Father and faithful to his purposes. Jesus modelled this for his disciples, including each of us.

WHEN DO I APPLY THIS DISCIPLINE?

When I first try to practise solitude, I may not know what to do, and it may feel awkward, like waiting for a blind date. It's normal to feel nervous and awkward. I may ask myself, "What am I supposed to do now in this place of silence?" As author Sharon Southwell says in *"The Life of Love: An invitation"*:

"Begin by becoming aware of your breath and following it for a time, in and out. Turn your attention to the space between your out breath and your in breath. Notice anything that arises there. If it feels right for you, rest yourself in that space."

God is as close as your breath. Rest with God in the rhythm of your breathing.

As I take time in solitude and silence, I come before God with no agenda other than to be present with God. The issues of life will eventually begin to melt away and I will sense God's presence and loving care surrounding me.

READY TO PRACTISE SOLITUDE?

1. Find time and a location where you can be alone
2. Plan in your calendar when you will practise solitude
3. Go with no agenda other than to be in the presence of God.
4. Start with 3-4 minutes and increase as you feel comfortable.

NOTES