

Spiritual Disciplines Series: Solitude

1 Kings 17:2-6

WRCoB 8.30.20

Do you feel anxious

When your cell phone is not nearby?

Do you constantly check for missed calls

Emails, text messages, or likes on a FB post?

If your answer is yes

Then you'd be called "nomophobic"

NO MOBILE PHONE PHOBIA

It is not, as of yet, considered a mental disorder.

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Here are findings from research by the LA Times

By Samantha Murphey and Deborah Netburn

- People check their phones on average 34x/day
- 66% fear losing or being w/out their phones
- 75% use their phone in the bath room
- 30% would rather leave their house w/out their credit card or cash than their cell phone.
- 55% of women would rather leave home w/out makeup than w/out their phones
- 11% would rather leave home w/out their pants than their phone.

I would like to know who creates these questions?

The cell phone has had an incredible impact
On our lives today.

Communication across the world
Is now available in the palm of your hand.

Any kind and amount of information is immediate.

It's incredible.

But research shows that cell phone usage
Comes at a great emotional
And I might add, spiritual cost.

As I see it
There are two problems in being connected.

The first problem is we forget how to be social!

Whether it is in a restaurant, waiting in line
Or at an airport

People's faces are in their phones
Their ears plugged with ear buds
Completely unconscious of their surroundings.

We do not know or care to know
How to be sociable with the person next to us.

Secondly, when we do disconnect
We don't know what to do with ourselves.

We're lonely without our phone.

MIT professor Sherry Turkle writes

Loneliness is failed solitude. We're raising a generation that has grown up with constant connection, and only knows how to be lonely when not connected.

Last week, Zherina and I spent some time
In a cabin at Douthat State Park.

We were without internet or phone service.

It took me a day to stop checking my phone
And to engage the wonderful experience
Of being in the woods.

The point being . . . ?
We've lost the ability to be comfortably alone.

From Deepak Chopra: *To make the right choices in life, you have to get in touch with your soul. To do this, you need to experience solitude, which most people are afraid of, because in the silence you hear the truth and know the solutions.*

And admittedly, sometimes we are afraid to be alone
Because we are not comfortable with who we are.
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Today we look at the 5th spiritual discipline; solitude.

The Bible introduces the great prophet Elijah
In this rather strange passage
Ann read this morning.

God tells Elijah to go to the mountains by himself.

The Bible doesn't explain why God wants him there.

Nor why he is to drink deeply from the brook
And why he is to let the ravens feed him.

I'm not sure I'd want to eat what ravens bring me.

I don't think we'd like the same kind of food!

It seems, though, if we were to read on
God wants Elijah to prepare for the call
God was about to place on Elijah's life.

For, it may be, it is only in solitude
That one is able to wrestle
With those sorts of things.

Jesus did something similar.

Following his baptism

Jesus goes off to the desert

For a forty-day back-packing trip.

It may have been there Jesus discovered

God's intent for his life's vocation.

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Psalm 23 has this fantastic imagery

Of what I'm trying to say.

Psalm 23:1 The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul.

The great American author, Jack Kerouac

From *Alone on the Mountaintop*

Has this great line.

I came to the point where I needed solitude and just stop the machine of 'thinking' and 'enjoying' what they call 'living', I just wanted to lie in the grass and look at the clouds.

I mean, seriously, isn't that what Psalm 23 is saying?

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Jesus knew the benefit getting off by himself.

He knew that to find rest for his soul

He needed to be alone and with God.

Upon the death of John the Baptist
Jesus had to get away.

Matthew 14:13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself.

Jesus knew that even he needed to rejuvenate.

Mark 1:35-37 And rising early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you".

Jesus needed solitude as a counterbalance
To the amount of time spent with people.

Jesus also knew he wasn't the only one.

When the disciples returned
From their mission journey, he told them

"Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest awhile." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat **(Mark 6:31-32).**

Think about this . . .

Maybe it is only in solitude
One is able to find true soul care.

Why?

Thomas Merton says

As soon as you are really alone, you are with God.

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What seems to be a common theme
In the spiritual disciplines we have looked at

Is this need to get away, get quiet, and get alone.

Because prayer, meditation, solitude
And living a simple life
Requires time away from the hustle and bustle!

We tend to fill up our lives with people and activity.

When we are noisy, preoccupied, and hurried
Busying our lives with "living"

It's awful hard to get in touch with the "you"
Deep down within your soul.

But so often, people remark being alone is lonely.

Richard Foster, author of *Spiritual Disciplines* writes

Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment.

The spiritual disciplines of
Meditation, prayer, and fasting
Prepare us for an encounter with God.

But if we don't provide some alone time
It is difficult to experience God.

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The hymn at the close of today's service
By the late Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick
Speaks of this in the first verse.

*O God, in restless living we lose our spirit's peace.
Calm our unwise confusion bid thou our clamor cease*

*Let anxious hearts grow quiet like pools at evening still.
Till thy reflected heavens all our spirits fill.*

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Joshua Becker, the author of *The More of Less*
And *The Minimalist's Home*
Says when we embrace solitude

- We intentionally remove the influence of others for period of time.
- We intentionally remove the expectations of others.
- We are able to hear our own heart speak.
- We find rest and refreshment.

- We discover that others can live without us.
- We find that the world does not rest on our shoulders.
- We can adequately reflect on our past and chart our future.
- We break the cycle of busyness in our lives.
- We become better equipped to show patience with others.
- We feed our souls.

From St Augustine's *Confessions of Faith*, "Thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee."

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So how do we do it?

Seems to me there are several things we can do
 To provide a bit of needed solitude in our lives.

Intentionally getting up earlier
 Than anyone else in the house
 Can provide some alone time.

Start with a cup of coffee
 Read a bit of the Bible, a book of poetry
 Listen to an inspiring piece of music
 Or just sit quietly for a time.

It really helps.

Secondly, take a walk by yourself

In the morning, at lunch break

After work, or in the evening before bed.

And let me say this

Only take your phone for emergencies.

Don't put ear buds in for music

Or call someone and talk for an hour.

This is counter-productive.

Thirdly, make a date with yourself.

Arrange to do something completely on your own.

Go out to eat, take in a movie

Go camping, go to the shore for the day.

We always think these are things

We should do with our loved ones, and rightfully so.

But take the opportunity once in a while

To do it on your own.

You might be surprised

What good company you really are!

Henry David Thoreau writes, *I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude.*"

Make time for the spiritual disciplines.

Seek God in prayer and meditation.

Take time to fast and study the Bible.

And get away, get alone, get quiet!

Get someplace by yourself

God is there!

Isn't that what we're talking about here?

Like Elijah, go and drink deep from the brook

And take nourishment from the ravens.

God is waiting.