

How to Structure an hour of Silence and Solitude

*O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you in a dry and weary land where there is no water.*
Psalm 63:1

*The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you in his love;
he will rejoice over you with singing.*
Zephaniah 3:17

*Father, I am here. You have invited me to come and find refreshment in you, so I've
come—even though I'm thirsty and tired and have no means to quench this hunger in my
soul. I've been working hard at so many things. I've come to listen for your voice and to
delight in the rich food from your table, to nourish my soul and quench my thirst.
Help me to recognize your presence. I'm here.*

Begin by Intentionally placing yourself in the Lord's presence

We withdraw from the busy world and enter into a time of being silent and alone for the purpose of creating inner space, where the “things of earth grow strangely dim” and we are able to focus our attention on the Lord—his glory and grace. At the beginning of the retreat, you want to do those practices that help you to settle in and reduce your mental distractions. Slow your breathing. You might try to be silent for 5, 10, or 20 minutes, listening with pen in hand to jot down any troubles, concerns, or to-do's that come to mind. Release them and return your attention to drawing closer to Jesus. Spending time in wordless prayer, praying a memorized verse of Scripture if you find your mind has wandered, and writing down the distracting thoughts are ways to settle in. You might also enjoy a walk in silence, stopping periodically to look at the tiniest things of nature (the smallest details of a flower, the rough bark of a tree). Often nature helps us to focus on the present moment and lifts our heart in wonder and awe.

Reflect on a passage of Scripture

Read a chapter or passage of Scripture softly aloud hearing the words as an intimate message to you from your Father. You might read the same passage several times. As you become familiar with the information in the passage, and reflect on questions that come to mind, try to move closer into the passage. Experience the words as if you were there. Hear the words as if spoken to you. Receive what the Holy Spirit draws your attention to. Hold on to it as a special gift from him. Cherish it.

Silence your soul and listen for his words

Be quiet as you seek to hear his still small voice of love whispering to your heart. Hearing his voice is an art and a skill that develops over time. Just enjoy being in his presence as you draw near to him. Use favorite worship music or listen to the Bible read aloud. Perhaps you'd like to sit before the Lord without words, just communing with God.

Journal your response

Write a prayer. Include words of truth you received and those times when you felt the movement of his Spirit.

Pray and praise

Move gently out of your time of solitude, thanking him for being with you.

