

Solitude – “the state or situation of being alone.” And “a lonely or uninhabited place.” For many at this point, one year of a Pandemic, social distancing, trying to stay safe for self and for others in our family, and in our community – **solitude** for some has been the norm. At the same time **solitude** – being alone has been a goal for at least 15 minutes a day as immediate family (maybe extended family) has been around more than was normal.

For me **solitude** usually looks like me on our back porch in the dark at 530am, with a small lamp lit on the table next to our patio chairs. It’s the time that I read email, check on events in our world, continue what book I’m reading and drink my morning coffee...alone.

I then practice the **solitude** that our Being Challenge this week references “being alone with God.” That time entails the references of our previous weeks’ emphasis “study scripture” and “prioritize prayer” as I read, reflect, pray, journal, pause, meditate...alone with God.

I often wonder what Jesus did in the many times He went away...alone with His Father God. I don’t think I try to make my morning time like Jesus’ time, but I have found the model of that practice important for me to get away and then discover God in scripture and Spirit with words of forgiveness, reminders of hope, promises of renewal and power to know the love He has for me. As my cup is filled those mornings, it seems I am more empowered to love the Lord my God and love my neighbors and even myself. I don’t always like the me I see in the **solitude**, so I value God’s grace that I experience in these times with God.

I also appreciate how Zach, our author, reminds us that **solitude** with God is not just about getting away from whatever is happening around us. Often **solitude** with God is a time God empowers us to go back into the world knowing love, knowing that we are the children He has made us and remakes us to be, and then empowers us to live that love with those around us. That time with God for me always starts with me bringing the junk of this imperfect world in me to Him, who forgives and frees me to know and live God’s grace.

“Be still and know that I am God...” Psalm 46

I pray you to find times of **solitude** and I pray for your times of **solitude** with God, as you are loved and filled with His grace and power.

-Rev. Dr. Rick Armstrong