

Strength From Solitude

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One of my favourite stories in Scripture to study with people is Mark 1:35-39. The opening chapter of Mark is dynamic. Jesus is on the move as he teaches, calls disciples, heals, drives out demons, and responds to people who need help. But after an evening in Capernaum with “*the whole town gathered at the door*” (v.33), this surprising story takes place:

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: ‘Everyone is looking for you!’ Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.”

I have been privileged to study this story with hundreds of people in the last fifteen years. Often people are inspired by the intentionality of Jesus: he gets up early, leaves a busy house, and finds a solitary place to pray. They also relate to the stressful expectations placed on Jesus, expressed through the disciples' exclamation, “*Everyone is looking for you!*” But my favorite question to ask by far is, “What does Jesus look like as he comes out of his time in solitude?” The single-word answers that come provide endless motivation to keep doing what we are doing in our work. Here are some of them:

Confident, Focused, Empowered, Purposeful,
Satisfied, Strengthened, Calm, Renewed, Wise

The next question I often ask is “How would you like some of that?” or “Does anybody here need a little of what Jesus found in solitude?” We all desperately need the kinds of benefits Jesus experienced from his time away, yet too often we fail to retreat from the daily grind.

Jesus modeled something we can put into practice today. He retreated to a solitary place. Strength came from that solitude and his journey continued with renewed purpose and peace. Why shouldn't it be the same for us?

Listening To God In Silence And Solitude

