



Jesus as an Introspective Leader

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In this information age where disconnecting proves difficult, I am reminded of a quote by James Mattis, “If I were to sum up the single greatest problem of senior leadership in the information age, it’s a lack of reflection.” This chapter will explore the importance of leadership solitude through the lens of Jesus in John 2:13–22, fighting for solitude; John 6:15, seeking solitude when others attempt to make you do something contrary to God’s calling on your life; John 10:39–42, retreating into solitude while waiting on God’s time; and John 21:15–19, finding solitude with trusted others about the forward mission. Leading as Jesus led within our community and organization is the goal, and maintaining a personal balance for self-reflection, prayer, and meditation is the method. Today’s Christian leadership can be identified through the lens of Jesus: how to serve, live in community, disciple, and maintain personal-development margins. Briner and Pritchard (1997) explain Jesus was utilizing his time, waking up early to pray, removing himself to a quiet place, and disciplining himself to maintain a posture of prayer and solitude. This should serve as an example for today’s Christians desiring to serve within any

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leadership position. The example of Jesus' solitude in the Gospel of John provides a guidepost for today's leaders as leaders balance organizational and communal workloads with personal development. This chapter will consider the importance of solitude for today's connected leaders using the four images of solitude that Jesus exemplifies in the Gospel of John.

JESUS AND SOLITUDE

Okoroafor (2019) explains that Jesus' prioritization of solitude and silence flows throughout the Gospels. Solitude is how Jesus begins his ministry, makes decisions, handles emotion, deals with the challenges of ministry, maintains self-care, and teaches the disciples. According to Morton (2015), the successes of Jesus' earthly ministry do not come from traditional leadership skills or development but rather it emerges from His personal relationship with God the Father, who empowers Jesus through Scripture to navigate temptation. According to Nouwen (1995), solitude is the space where our spiritual discipline is established and where we can hear the Holy Spirit's whispers.

Morton (2015) states that in the information age, it is paramount that tomorrow's emerging leaders practice the discipline of solitude and understand the necessity of spending time alone in reflection, seeking God's voice. Jesus does not outline solitude as an obligation or significant religious exercise. Because He recognizes that faith is an outward life, Jesus mirrors the Old Testament prophets in His ability to navigate from solitude to the outward moments in His earthly ministry (Bowker & Coplan, 2014). Plummer (2009) states that for Christians, spaces of solitude serve to provide psychological or emotional encouragement and allow a person to focus solely on Christ's will for his or her life.

According to Akrivou et al. (2011), solitude allows a person to identify positive characteristics for the intention of an inward and outward benefit, not for the sake of isolating oneself or because of an inability to cope with external variables. Harris (2017) details the importance of leaders' understanding that solitude is under attack by the onslaught of digital information and our busy schedules. Our margins are skewed, which, in turn, creates inward loneliness that longs for unhealthy isolation. Akrivou et al. (2011) explain a model for leaders that details how expanded solitude utilization bolsters a person's capacity for moral leadership and reduces the likelihood of neutral leadership; solitude strengthens ethical leadership by substantially enhancing a leader's capacity to morally

reason. Deresiewicz (2010) details solitude as a space for contemplation, reflection, meditation, and, counterintuitively, friendship, as two people are engaging in a lengthy, uninterrupted conversation in which they strengthen each other.

JOHN 2:13–22: FIGHTING FOR SOLITUDE

Pink (1923–1945) explains that during biblical times the cattle dealers and money changers were well known for price gouging and pocketing more than their fair share of the sales, and history validates Christ for calling the temple court a den of thieves. Within the marketplace, people were outrageously cheated, and the worship of God was crippled and obstructed rather than promoted and enriched (Pink, 1923–1945). Kruse (2003) explains that Jesus' opposition was not directly to the money changers; instead, He was agitated by the thought that this was happening within the temple court, a space that was supposed to be reserved for prayer and solitude. According to Milne (1993), Jesus' anger seems to be focused on the presence of merchants bringing all of the confusion into a quiet space of meditation on God, a space of solitude to seek God prayerfully. Jesus, knowing the importance of a space of solitude, removes the noise and clamor of the world, and fights for the Gentiles' solitude in the temple courts.

The scene at the temple court admonishes present-day Christians for allowing the surrounding culture to remove these spaces of quiet reflection from our busy lives; areas that were once reserved for meditation have become boisterous and bustling slots on a calendar that we fill, spaces that are devoid of solitude (Pink, 1923–1945). Kruse (2003) states that the only space of solitude where the Gentiles could go to pray within the temple was the court of the Gentiles, and it had been turned into a clamorous location by the cattle dealers and money changers. Carson (1991) explains that Jesus was not merely objecting to the unethical commerce that was taking place; He was emphatically stating that such practices should not take place within the temple courts, a space where one could find refuge, quiet, and solitude to commune with God. Jesus' frustration was with the fact that these people had turned the temple courts, which were meant for quiet reflection, into a clamorous location.

Milne (1993) details that rather than the temple court being a space for a person to reflect and seek God quietly, there is the clamoring of merchants; instead of solitude, there is boisterous commerce. According

to Pink (1923–1945), a person seeking to find a place of solitude for worship had to force their way through the annoying solicitation of the market dealers, having their quiet time with the Lord interrupted by the yelling within the cattle market. Christ did not idly stand by and allow this space of solitude to be abused. His devotion and passion for an intimate relationship with God the Father overwhelmed Him, and He fought for this space to return to a space of solace, reflection, and solitude for the people (Pink, 1923–1945). Jamieson et al. (1997) explain that it was not that the merchandise was unacceptable, but the fact that it was being sold in the temple court, a place of solitude—a blasphemy that Jesus would not stand for. In today’s world, we are bombarded with information, schedules, and social media, and Jesus calls on us to fight for our solitude, to remove ourselves from the commotion that has become our normal daily life.

Erwin and Kethledge (2017) explain that leadership solitude is under attack in today’s information age, with most people feeling connected continuously in the workplace through personal connective technologies that are introduced daily. Buchholz (1998) states that solitude in today’s information age is being challenged. Merton (1958) says that, when a society is comprised of leaders who devalue solitude, the culture is no longer able to be bound together by love. Hence, they allow themselves to be held together by abusive behavior that is counter to the Gospel. Storr (1988) explains that, in our Western culture, solitude is a difficult space to find and maintain, and that leaders, for their own personal health, must continue to seek out these spaces of personal self-reflection. Bowker and Coplan (2014) explain that solitude is a commitment to process beneficial attitudes and beliefs in a space void of distraction.

We see the importance of solitude by understanding that Jesus drove out the merchants and cattle dealers not because they were selling goods but, instead, because they were obstructing one’s ability to seek God earnestly within a space of quiet reflection. Averill et al. (2003) detail the importance of finding periods of solitude away from communal pressure, whereby we provide ourselves with the opportunity to meditate and process personal, spiritual, and professional development. Solitude was not only under attack within John 2:13–22; our solitude is also under attack because we, today’s leaders, are always connected, overloaded with information, and awaiting the next pings on our phones.

As Christian leaders within a connected world, we fight to have spaces of solitude not only within our own lives but also within the lives of our

followers and to challenge a connected society to remove the noise and clutter and seek Jesus. Nouwen (1995) explains that God encourages us to be connected to Him first. Bratman et al. (2015) describe how a short amount of time spent disconnecting in a natural environment improves mental alertness and proposes that usable natural spaces within urban areas are a critical resource for a person's psychological health within the connected world. Today's Christian leaders mirror Jesus by helping themselves and their followers maintain a space for balance within their lives by combating a constant connected lifestyle. Christian leadership is about a relationship and lifestyle that embodies the teachings of Jesus. One of those essential teachings is to embrace a space of solitude, personal reflection, and prayer, which in turn provides leaders a healthy balance with the outward connected focus of the world.

Morton (2015) found that a leader's ability to continue to lead productively was directly linked to his or her ability to find spaces for spiritual fulfillment, highlighting the importance of Jesus' fighting for solitude in John 2:13–22. The spiritual practices implemented by leaders were identified as significant contributors to staving off burnout and increasing productivity (Morton, 2015). Briner and Pritchard (1997) encourage leaders to find solitude throughout the day and get creative finding it, knowing that leadership encompasses both a requirement to live within a community and pursuing solitary spaces of reflection and prayer for personal edification.

Nouwen (1995) explains that the order through which God teaches us begins in a solitary, reflective space with God, which establishes a foundation for fellowship in which to live out God's mission. Subsequently, this community of believers moves together into the culture to proclaim the Gospel. Hetzel and Castillo (2014) explain that the objective of solitude is not to be alone, but for a person to be alone with God. Plummer (2009) states that spaces of solitude not only serve as a psychological or emotional encouragement for Christian leaders, they also provide space for a person to place their focus solely on Christ's will for their life. According to Hetzel and Castillo (2014), solitude intensifies a person's ability to hear God and effectively enter a space of communion with Him, healing areas of our lives that need attending to and softening our hearts toward those against whom we struggle. With the importance of solitude, shouldn't today's leaders be fighting against today's information age and the ever-connected culture in favor of spaces of solitude?

Principle One: As leaders in today's information age, we have to fight, as Jesus did within John 2:13–22, to maintain spaces of solitude within our lives—to remove ourselves from the noise and clamor of the outside world to maintain a state of connection with God.

JOHN 6:15 SEEKING SOLITUDE FOR BALANCE AND DIRECTION

The story of Jesus' feeding the five thousand highlights for today's leaders the difficulty of balancing people and solitude. It highlights the need to understand the reality of a growing population's needing services, as well as the imperative to be both poor and poor in spirit (Milne, 1993). Milne (1993) details that Jesus' removing himself and rejecting their pursuit to make him king is a sudden and definitive action, and when placed within the context of the earlier temptation in Matthew 4:8, which pursues a political route to being king, it allows one to understand how such a decision would bypass the path to the cross for Jesus. Westcott and Westcott (1908) explain that the people intended to use Jesus, against his will, to accomplish their agenda, so Jesus removed himself. Today, Christian leaders are constantly pulled in different directions, overburdened by completing tasks that drain their energy away from God's calling on their lives. Understanding the path that God has called leaders to and remaining steadfast to that path, as Jesus does, is vital in today's world.

Chrysostom (1856) explains that Jesus went up to the mountain to demonstrate to the disciples and today's leaders how to avoid accolades and remove oneself from the midst of adoration, in order to seek, like Jesus, solitude for the pursuit of God's will for our lives. According to Barclay (2001), the people followed Jesus because He was providing them with what they desired, and they wanted to use Him for their gain. Jesus knew this. He knew they wanted gifts without the cross, and He responded by removing Himself to pray. Kruse (2003) explains that the occurrence of Jesus feeding these five thousand people started when He went up on the mountain with the disciples, and it ended when Jesus removed Himself to the mountain, doing so to withdraw from people who wanted to make Him king.

Aquinas (1845) states that when Jesus anticipated the people would demand He become king, He moved to a solitary place on a mountain. Barclay (2001) details that the people were enthusiastic when Jesus gave them what they wanted, healing them, feeding them, teaching them.

Because of this, they would, therefore, make Him their king, but Jesus knew that His ministry was about more than the giving of physical needs. Chrysostom (1856) states that Jesus would regularly remove Himself to a solitary place to demonstrate solitude as an essential practice when approaching God, striving to find a space that is void of the clamor of the world, seeking time free from disruption.

Just as Jesus seeks out solitude in John 6:15, leaders today must seek spaces of refuge from the onslaught of information and connectivity in today's world. Bergmann and Hippler (2018) state that the exploration of solitude is an undertaking that comes at an emotional price and allows a person to reflect on his or her positive and negative leadership capacities. Within today's connected world, it is difficult to maintain a posture of quiet reflection, but Jesus calls each of us through John 6:15 to seek out space to connect to Him. As people remove themselves too much from the community, their lives become void of opportunities to share God's love with others, and as leaders move too far into community, they diminish their ability to meditate on God's word and have a time of personal reflection and prayer. Maslach and Cooke (2000) explain that extended periods of stress, brought on by unbalanced personal margins, materialize into burnout, which is the feeling of being extremely tired by one's work, thus making a leader interpersonally distant, and indifferent to personal achievement. There is no shortage of good things that we can do as leaders, but we process these things within spaces of solitude in order to ask, "Are these things I'm being asked to do God's will or mine?"

Christian leaders constantly have outside forces attempting to push them off their path of seeking out God's calling for their lives, so continuing to seek God's will and direction becomes an essential component to living a life of faith. Living in the world but not being of the world, it is possible to fall into the pitfalls of over-scheduling, never having time to process God moving within our lives, the direction he is calling us. Embracing (2017) explains that a leader who maintains a schedule that is void of solitude, therefore, has no space for personal reflection, and without self-reflection, it proves difficult for leaders to maintain a healthy balance of personal and organizational needs.

Collins et al. (2017) detail that solitude plays an essential role as a leader seeks clarity, helping them to re-center and confidently navigate difficult decisions with clearer thoughts. Kethledge and Erwin (2017) explains that through the differing methods of solitude, leaders utilize the

ability to contemplate and reflect, with the same outcome in mind: time away from the world's distractions, which allows a leader's inner voice a space to guide and connect to something greater than ourselves. Byrd and Thomas (2019) explain that a person removes themselves from external distractions in solitude to increase communication with the inner self. According to Burton-Christie (2003), solitude allows a leader to maintain a posture of openness to the Holy Spirit, to process and understand both the renewing power of God and the deception of the devil.

To understand the benefits of solitude, a person must also know its pitfalls. Akrivou et al. (2011) explain the pivotal point at which the frequency of solitude becomes dangerous for a person, and that this threshold varies from person to person. Basil of Caesarea (329–379) was against solitude; he described the necessity for Christians to live in a community with other people because it protects them from the dangers of self-indulgence, pride, and self-delusion by pointing out one-anothers' errors. He explained that the Christian life demands communion with and service of people, where we have the opportunity to show God's love for others.

Long et al. (2003) state that a benefit of solitude is the ability to freely move through one's thoughts without the fear of judgment, non-objectively processing ideas, casting vision, and allowing space for self-reflection and spirituality. Foster (1988) explains that a person who understands the importance of solitude must be on guard against confusing doing specific religious deeds at a set time with successfully meditating. Averill and Long (2003) state that the person seeking solitude can circumvent isolation through their rapport with trusted individuals or preoccupy themselves with contentment or intrigue.

Bonhoeffer (1954) states that a person who struggles to maintain solitary spaces must be cautious of community, and a person who distances themselves from the community must be cautious of solitude, knowing that too much of either is hazardous. Littman-Ovadia (2019) details the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between finding spaces of solitude and living within a community. Bonhoeffer (1954) explains that a person who desires community without solitude finds contentment through interpersonal communication and emotions, while one who desires solitude without community can succumb to pride, arrogance, and sadness. According to Littman-Ovadia (2019), solitude is not to remove oneself from the world; solitude is a style of participating within it, promoted by temporary separation from interpersonal communication.

While the community is an essential component of a faithful life, too much social interaction can become stifling (Averill et al., 2003).

According to Littman-Ovadia (2019), maintaining margin within one's life, balancing solitude and interpersonal communication, allows a person to balance their development as a leader and fosters a complete and satisfying life. Akrivou et al. (2011) found through research that solitude has become part of a productive process for the growth of leaders, and spaces of silence and reflection are shown as an instrument for the enhancement of moral leadership. According to Foster (1988), the fruit of solitude is heightened self-awareness and an outward compassion for people, allowing oneself to meditate on the response to a person's needs thoughtfully. Long et al. (2003) explain solitude, in contrast to loneliness, as a space that a person seeks, benefiting from the opportunity to create and build oneself through reflection and introspection freely. Leary et al. (2003) detail that future research on solitude should surround definitive factors that influence the demographics of people who pursue and enjoy solitude.

Principle Two: Healthy Christian leaders must maintain a balance between solitude and community, understanding that too much of either becomes detrimental to a person's spiritual health.

JOHN 10:39–42 SOLITUDE WHILE WAITING ON GOD'S TIME

During a time of struggle in His earthly ministry, when Jesus needed to connect to God, He went back to the location where the Lord had descended upon him, and we would do well also to make a pilgrimage back to a location where we encountered God (Barclay, 2001). Lincoln (2005) explains that the last three verses of John Chapter 10 establish a structural transition in Jesus' earthly ministry, and they demonstrate His response to the hostile treatment He endured at the hands of the religious leaders; in short, this section details how Jesus transitions by removing Himself once again to connect with God the Father. Barclay (2001) illustrates that Jesus knew the path God had laid out for Him and the hour in which it would happen; He did not carelessly seek out threats to his path, nor did He sidestep risk to preserve His life. He desired quiet alone time with God before the final struggle. Christian leaders are many times forced to make quick decisions, rapidly moving from one thing to the

next, allowing external stimuli to determine what's next. Seeking solitude, waiting on God, and allowing the Holy Spirit to guide becomes a vital component of living a life of faith in today's connected world.

The location that Jesus returns to is noteworthy; it is where He was baptized and where the voice of the Lord descended upon Him. For Christians today, this highlights the importance of periodically returning to the place where we experienced the presence of God, where God speaks to us—a space where we can be encouraged (Barclay, 2001). Govett (1881) explains that the crossing of the Jordan put a strong barrier between Jesus and His adversaries, which allowed Him a space of solitude to rest. Barclay (2001) explains that the location where Jesus retreated to is a pleasant place for Him; it is the spot where He heard the voice of the Lord assuring Him about His decision and letting Him know that He was on the right path. Kelly (1898) states that the religious leaders desired to apprehend Jesus by force, and He removed himself to across the Jordan not because the belief of the religious leaders was lacking but rather because His time had not yet come. Through God's grace, He converts many people who observe in Him the truth of John's testimony. Before Jesus was to exert himself, he armed himself with alone time with God; he removed himself to the other side of the Jordan to prepare for the final battle, not to run away from what was the current one (Barclay, 2001). A key component to leadership is providing direction and purpose for the organization and its people. In a connected world that asks for quick decisions, it is necessary for Christian leaders to maintain a space of solitude that eases their minds and provides them with a comfortable space to process direction.

As Jesus in John 10:39–42 calls on the reflective leader to balance decisions and wait on God's timing, we gain an understanding of the importance of reflection for leaders in an organization. Research completed by Doohan (2007) shows that a reflective and non-discriminatory leader is essential to an organization, highlighting the importance of a leader who seeks solitude while waiting on God's direction. Burger (1995) describes how short periods of solitude provide emotional renewal before engaging in interpersonal communication. Leaders who are thoughtfully processing decisions, contemplating their followers' opinions, and deliberately navigating differing outcomes in different situations are vital to the overall health and success of an organization (Doohan, 2007). As followers of Jesus and leaders within our respective callings, we thoughtfully and

reflectively make decisions for the betterment of our followers and organizations. Taking time away from life's distractions and finding a space of quiet solitude to process allows a leader to respond to external stimuli rather than simply react.

According to DeGrosky (2011), vision or forward-thinking is necessary to leadership, as is the ability to self-reflect, concentrate on one's work, read without interruption, and participate in extended conversation with another individual. McKinney (2017) explains that solitude helps eliminate or deemphasize distractions, helping a leader intuitively clarify their analytical thoughts. According to Byrd and Thomas (2019), solitude encourages leaders to self-reflect on the difficulties of leadership without the fear of judgment. Adelman (2014) explains that the benefits of solitude include freedom from social impulsion and interaction, providing a space to gain harmony with the self and tune one's moral compass.

Leary et al. (2003) provide research through the lens of healthy solitude—spending time alone for personal development—versus the desire to isolate from other people. Leary et al. (2003) detail in their research that the frequency with which a person immerses themselves in solitary spaces and whether they enjoy solitude is attributed to an individual's personal preference toward solitude rather than to any unwillingness to engage in social interactions. Long et al. (2003) state that not all people find solitude beneficial, understanding that a psychological metamorphosis toward engaging in activities that require solitude would intimidate some rather than encourage them. Akrivou et al. (2011) found that only a person who chooses to embrace solitude—not imposed or sanctioned but decided upon deliberately and voluntarily—benefits inwardly and outwardly from the space. Leary et al. (2003) also state that a person's willingness to engage in solitary activities came more from understanding solitude as a space for personal development rather than from a desire to teach interpersonal interactions.

For today's leaders, waiting is like torture. Today's information-age leader would rather do anything but wait. Decisions are made quickly, on the fly, and this is encouraged by a fast-paced society. Harris (2017) states that solitude is useful for cultivating new ideas, inwardly searching and identifying blind spots, and processing one's external relationships. As leaders process direction, casting vision for the future of organizations, a time of waiting is vital. God's calling, and God's timing, will always be God's calling on God's time, not ours. If the Lord has opened a door and provides a path, the door will stay open until He closes it. The world sells

successful leadership as the ability to make quick, microwavable decisions. At the same time, God calls on leaders to seek His direction, processing and praying over the vision for an organization, slowly allowing things to happen on God's timing, much like cooking in a crockpot.

Thapar and Rudman (2019) explain that the benefits of solitude are countless within professions that place a premium on systematic reasoning and on the importance of leaders' examining different styles and methods of personalized solitude. Jesus knew that this was not His path, nor was it God's timing for His death, so He removed himself to prepare for his impending death, the path that God had laid out for him. According to Averill and Long (2003), solitude provides a space that allows a person to partake in personal introspection, which is not provided by our cultural surroundings. Jones (2017) completed a qualitative study on a person's reentry into communal living and found that as each participant moved back into the community after a period of solitude, they did so with a better self-awareness, stating that the time in solitude allowed them to process their life, struggles, and goals within an environment free from external influence and opinions.

Teo et al. (2013) explain that solitude, in contrast to isolation, encourages individuals to attend to the spiritual, emotional, and behavioral needs of themselves and others. Leary et al. (2003) state that the regularity and gratification of spaces of solitude are significantly associated with a desire for solitude rather than a person's introverted personality. Ellerbeck et al. (2014) found that the untaught mind does not enjoy solitude and would instead rather complete a negative task than be alone with its thoughts. Ellerbeck et al. (2014) establish that participants had negative emotions when made to spend 6 to 15 minutes secluded with their thoughts. Ellerbeck et al. (2014) found that these individuals preferred doing routine external tasks, and many chose to administer electric shocks to themselves rather than being isolated with their thoughts.

Foster (1988) states one explanation for people's struggles with solitude is the feeling of helplessness they experience when they've been trained to depend on interpersonal communication to lead others; in essence, people never truly allow God to take control of a situation, and they fail to understand that silence and solitude are intertwined with a person's ability to trust. Long et al. (2003) explain that for a person to find solitude advantageous, they must maintain within themselves the ability to search for meaning in circumstances in which external reinforcements are inadequate. Bonhoeffer (1954) details the importance of a

person's ability to maintain personal margins and enter into both solitude and community in a healthy balance to receive God's unconditional love. With information and scheduling overload, today's leaders feel like they always have to be doing something; they always have to be connected, easily reached, and available. Christian leaders have to relearn how to embrace solitude.

Principle Three: For Christian leaders in a connected world, solitude allows leaders the time and space they need to work through God's direction for their lives and the organizations they are leading.

JOHN 21:15–19 SOLITUDE WITH TRUSTED OTHERS ABOUT FORWARD MISSION

Kelly (1898) explains how within this secluded conversation, Jesus restores to Peter the freedom and authority to teach the Gospel, publicly announcing in front of six other disciples that the public denial of Jesus has been forgiven. Such a restoration was needed for both Peter and the disciples so they would know that the weight of sin is not a reason for abandoning the spread of the Gospel. Within this private interaction, Jesus entrusted Peter with authority over the ministry, and Peter does not defer to the other disciples to act as an intercessor for him, even going as far as to seek information from Jesus on behalf of the others, all while John remained silent (Chrysostom, 1856). Milne (1993) explains that Jesus addresses Peter in this private interaction as “Simon, son of John,” not “Peter, the rock of my church” because Jesus is showing him that on his own, Simon will always be Simon, but the Simon who trusts Jesus is Peter the rock, a pillar on whom the early church will rely for leadership and direction. The breakfast on the beach in John 21:15–19 leads to an interaction between Jesus and Peter where a select few are present, allowing Jesus to communally reestablish Peter after the public dishonor of his denials (Milne, 1993). Christian leaders exemplifying the character traits of Jesus identify with his ability to navigate the forward mission of the Gospel with Peter and the disciples. Bringing trusted others into private spaces of solitude to process organizational goals, struggles, and issues allows them the opportunity, much like Peter, to be forgiven for past mistakes while encouraged for the future mission.

Jesus publicly restores Peter and commissions him with His authority, knowing that the other disciples would have doubts about a man who had, despite a warning, fully denied the Lord (Chrysostom, 1856). Jesus'

closing words to Peter, “Follow me,” not only invite Peter to interact with him intimately, but they connect the process of discipleship to Jesus’ original call in John 1:43; they challenge Peter to continually seek a relationship with Jesus until his impending martyrdom, inviting each of us, during our times of doubt, to remain resilient in our pursuit of Jesus (Carson, 1991). During this private interaction, Jesus is encouraging Peter, entrusting him with the authority of the ministry, showing him that in the impending struggles, he must remain steadfast because his denial of Jesus had been completely forgiven (Chrysostom, 1856). Kruse (2003) explains that during this private interaction with the disciples, Jesus, in commissioning Peter, asks him whether he loved him more than these, and Peter’s response becomes a public declaration of his love for Jesus that supersedes his public denial. Jesus responds, “Feed my lambs.” Maintaining a posture of humility and treating others as we would like to be treated provides leaders with the insight to privately address public mistakes, much like Jesus does with Peter, before making public statements regarding the organization’s future.

When the time comes for leaders to build up and encourage employees in order to direct the organization, the leader seeks a space for solitude with trusted others to communicate the organizational vision, as Jesus did in John 21:15–29. Littman-Ovadia (2019) states that communal living must be balanced with solitude, understanding that healthy relationships cannot exist without solitude or space where one can reflect with themselves and trusted others. Leading (2017) emphasizes the importance of solitude, both professionally and personally, and how we, as leaders, are continuously required to make quick decisions while Jesus challenges us to stop, reflect, process, and discern with quiet time alone and with others.

According to Detrixhe (2011), a person’s willingness to live within the community works in harmony with their ability to seek solitude for personal development. 800 CEO (2017) states that solitude provides a leader with space for clarity, conviction, courage, and necessary self-reflection to understand the consequences of our actions. Greenleaf (1996) states that servant leaders require a space for solitude where they can self-reflect and understand themselves and others on a deeper level. Buchholz (1998) explains that solitude is boundless, encourages our circumstances, polishes our thoughts, provides a space for relaxation, and encourages the innovation of inventive ideas for ourselves and others.

Solitude provides an ability to enter a space of self-reflection, whether in nature, a monastery, another environment, or with God, through prayer (Averill & Long, 2003). Littman-Ovadia (2019) defines solitude as a return to one's inner self, allowing a person to experience sources of understanding and truth beyond themselves. Burger (1995) states that solitude provides leaders with space to contemplate the self, reflect on past events, and prepare for future endeavors. Rather than distancing from interpersonal communication and isolating oneself, solitude should be seen as a valued space for self-reflection that increases the personal development of leaders, allowing them to find an internal balance of introspection and community (Durà-Vilà & Leavey, 2017). According to Teo et al. (2013), a leader who strives to maintain periods of self-reflection interlaced with spaces of interpersonal communication with trusted others will gain the ability to maintain balance between solitude and community.

Principle Four: As leaders in today's fast-paced culture, we have a responsibility to exemplify the spiritual discipline of Jesus by seeking solitude with trusted others. This happens by removing ourselves and others to a space of reflection.

SUMMARY

According to Coplan and Bowker (2014), solitude provides leaders with a space to contemplate and understand the underlying sources of value within their life and to examine the self without the distraction of outside influences. Harris (2017) states that solitude is useful for an individual cultivating new ideas, inwardly searching and identifying blind spots, and processing one's external relationships. Saint Anthony of Egypt explained that the person who abides in solitude and quiet is delivered from fighting three battles: hearing, speech, and sight. He believed that after that, there remains one thing for a person to battle: the heart.

Collins et al. (2017) state that solitude must be built into a leader's life by intentionally designating certain amounts of time when nothing will be scheduled in their calendar. Byrd and Thomas (2019) state that solitude encourages reflection, which is a conduit to effective interpersonal communication. Adelman (2014) states that solitude allows one's mind to experience revelations, garden creative observations, and maintain space for forward-thinking, inventive ideas. Teo et al. (2013) state that momentary periods of self-reflection are highly therapeutic and help a person fix his or her attention on a present situation and reduce anxiety. According

to Durà-Vilà and Leavey (2017), solitude is an essential element for an intimate relationship with Christ and does not lead to isolation. Rather, it serves as a medium for a person to commune with the Holy Spirit.

The world will always force us to act in ways contrary to God's calling. The devil constantly tried to remove Jesus from His path through deception, promising glory here on Earth. For today's Christian leaders, when the world attempts to force us to act in a manner contrary to God's calling for our life, we must process and respond rather than haphazardly react on emotion. According to Harris (2017), solitude is not the attempt to remove oneself from society but a discipline that provides a person with the ability to inwardly contemplate ideas, the self, and external stimuli in an effort to respond to dealings in a healthy manner. As Christian leaders, we do not serve for accolades, or strive to achieve power on this earth. We mirror Jesus, maintaining a posture of humility, serving others, and remaining steadfast to the calling God laid on our hearts. Doing so is not easy, knowing that the world will attempt to make you something you are not. By processing our calling and the direction of God's path for our lives and by being intentional about removing ourselves from the distractions of the world, finding a quiet space to reconnect with God becomes a vital component to today's decision-making leaders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When is the last time you sought solitude, and what was the motivation behind it?
2. Can you identify some spaces of solitude within your life?
3. What threatens or competes for your attention? What are some things that you would have to eliminate from your schedule to practice solitude?
4. What practices have you learned to employ to record your spiritual journey to access a greater understanding of yourself and those you lead?
5. Are you drawn more to solitude or community, knowing that too much of either is unhealthy for a leader?
6. What would it look like to practice solitude together in a community of believers?

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