

## **Silence & Solitude**

### **Part 2: Emotional Health**

This material was developed by practicingtheway.org. Visit their website for more information.

Here's the practice for the coming week:

1. Put away your phone or any other distractions, settle into your time/place, and get comfortable.

2. Begin with a breathing prayer.

- Close your eyes.
- Take long, deep, slow breaths (if you want, count 4 seconds in, 4 seconds wait, 4 seconds out, repeat). Inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth.
- Start to pay attention to your breathing. Just “watch” your breath go in and out.
- Release the constant chatter in your mind. Let each thought go as quickly as it comes, and just focus on your breathing.
- Your mind will seize this opportunity to run wild with thoughts, feelings, memories, to do's, and distractions. That's okay. Don't judge yourself, feel bad, give up or worry. When you notice your mind start to wander, just recenter with a quick prayer, like, “Father...” and come back to your breathing.
- In the beginning, just 1-2 minutes of this is a huge win, and 10 minutes is a home run.

3. Spend a few minutes “abiding in the vine”

4. Let yourself feel.

- What emotions rise to the surface of your heart, big or small? You might feel joy, gratitude, sadness, emptiness, fatigue, worry, guilt and shame, conviction, or any number of positive or negative emotions.
- Name “the good, the bad, and the ugly” of your emotional state.
- Don't run away from what you're feeling. In the Father's presence, face each emotion head on. Let yourself feel it, deeply.
- Remember: emotional pain isn't something to avoid. Instead, think of it as a place to meet God and open yourself up to him in new ways.

5. Ask yourself the Elijah question: “What are you doing here, \_\_\_\_\_?”

- Another way to ask this is: Where are you at with yourself and God right now? Is there anything God is trying to say to you through these emotions?

6. Pray: Get it all off your chest. Give whatever you are feeling over to God - the good, the bad, and the ugly. No filter. The point here isn't to be good, but to be honest.

- Different emotions call for different kinds of prayer.
- If you're happy - celebrate! Sing! Dance!
- If you're grateful, tell God what for with specificity.
- If you're anxious, give your worry over to the Father and ask for his peace in return.
- If you're sitting in unanswered questions about your life or future, hold that tension before God. Tell him how it feels not to have an answer. Don't force clarity where there is none. Just be patient before God with all that is unsolved in your heart.

7. Close in a prayer of gratitude and commit everything you're feeling to the Father.

- Note: After a few days of this practice, or toward the end of the week, we recommend you do two things:
- Set aside a little time to write out your experience in a journal.
- Go share your experience with a close friend or Community member.

Finally: Continue to resist the urge to say, "I'm bad at this" or "I didn't get anything out of it." Just practice. And be patient.

Close in prayer