



## Opening Ourselves to God's Gifts in Solitude

Stepping from the noise and pace of ordinary life into solitude can be jarring. Our minds may feel like they are going through withdrawals from the drugs of incessant stimulation and activity. Especially at first, we must actively resist the urge to reach for the "stimulants" that typically fill our days – smart phones, podcasts and pop music, even Christian literature.

At the same time, it can be helpful to form a plan (always loosely held!) for a flow of activities that help us open ourselves to the gifts God has for us in silence. Some ideas include:

- Prayers of confession
- Prayers of praise and thanksgiving
- Prayers of supplication
- Prayers of intercession for others
- Prayer of Silent Waiting and Listening Before God
- Praying the words of Psalms or other Scripture
- Praying written prayers (i.e. [Book of Common Prayer](#) & [A Diary of Private Prayer](#))
- Exercises of *Lectio Divina*
- Memorizing Scripture\*
- Reciting/meditating on Scriptures previously memorized
- Reading Scripture to reflect and ponder (meditation)
- Reading Scripture to learn (study)\*
- Contemplation without words – simply enjoying the presence of God
- Journaling -- articulating questions, struggles, thanksgiving, and prayers
- Singing hymns and other songs of worship. (Bring an instrument!)
- Listening to hymns and songs of worship & joining reverently in them
- Outdoor walks as time for reflection, praise, prayer and/or meditation

*"Solitude is not a private therapeutic place. Rather, it is the place of conversion, the place where the old self dies and the new self is born... [T]he confrontation with our own frightening nothingness forces us to surrender ourselves totally and unconditionally to the Lord Jesus Christ."*

(Nouwen, [The Way of the Heart](#))

*"We can only survive solitude if we cling to Christ there."* (Willard, [Spirit of the Disciplines](#))

\*Note: If study, memorization or any other activity feels to us like a "project" and/or stimulant that merely fills and distracts from the silence, we may be wise to forgo them during our time of solitude.