

Rediscovering Solitude

An Introduction to Intentional Solitude In a distracted Age

Eremos 
Experience the wilderness!



Introduction

We live in a distracted age.

Our days are filled with notifications, responsibilities, conversations, headlines, schedules, and the constant pull of things demanding our attention. Busyness has become a badge of honor. Silence feels unfamiliar. Even moments of waiting are quickly filled with scrolling, listening, or doing.

Many of us are tired.

We long for rest, clarity, and a deeper awareness of God's presence, but we often assume those things require more time than we have or a life very different from the one we are living. We imagine solitude as something reserved for monasteries, mountain retreats, or early mornings before the rest of the world wakes up.

But perhaps solitude is closer than we think.

Intentional solitude is not an escape from life. It is not abandoning our responsibilities, withdrawing from the people we love, or chasing some idealized spiritual experience. Instead, solitude is the simple practice of creating space to become more attentive: to God, to ourselves, and to the life we have been given.

This guide is not an invitation to perfection. It is not a call to dramatic change or grand gestures. It is an introduction to a quiet practice that can be woven into ordinary life: in the school pickup line, during a walk around the neighborhood, or in the few moments before sleep.

You do not need to have all the answers. You do not need hours of free time. You do not need to become someone else before you begin.

You only need a willingness to pay attention.

Whether you are spiritually weary, simply curious, or longing for a deeper awareness of God in the midst of everyday life, this guide is an invitation.

- to slow down.
- to make space.
- to rediscover solitude.

Why Solitude Matters Today

We live in a world that constantly competes for our attention. Notifications buzz. Headlines update by the minute. Music fills the silence. We listen to podcasts while driving, scroll while waiting in line, and reach for our phones the moment we have a spare minute. Even our rest is often accompanied by a screen.

None of these things are inherently bad. Many of them enrich our lives, connect us with others, and help us learn and grow. The challenge is not that they exist. The challenge is that we rarely make space for anything else.

Over time, constant input can become so normal that we stop noticing it altogether. Silence feels uncomfortable. Waiting feels unproductive. Being alone with our thoughts feels unfamiliar. We move from one demand to another without ever asking what all that noise might be doing to us.

Perhaps this is why so many of us feel scattered, hurried, or exhausted. We struggle to pay attention not because we don't care, but because our attention has been divided in countless small ways.

What receives our attention shapes the people we become.

Solitude offers a different way.

It invites us to step out of the current, if only for a few moments, and remember what it feels like to be fully present.

To notice. To listen. To pay attention.

In a distracted age, choosing moments of intentional solitude is not about escaping life.

It is about returning to it with greater attentiveness.

What Is Solitude?

When many people hear the word *solitude*, they picture being alone.

A cabin in the woods. A mountaintop at sunrise. A quiet room untouched by interruption.

While solitude can include these moments, it is something deeper than simply being by yourself.

Intentional solitude is the practice of making space to become more attentive. It is choosing, for a time, to step away from distraction and noise so that we can notice what often goes unseen in the rush of everyday life.

Solitude is intentional.

It does not happen by accident. It is a choice to pause, to pay attention, and to resist the urge to immediately fill every moment with activity or input.

Solitude is temporary.

It is not a withdrawal from the people we love or the responsibilities we carry. Rather than pulling us away from life, healthy solitude prepares us to return to it with greater presence, clarity, and compassion.

Solitude is purposeful.

It is not empty for the sake of emptiness. Christians have long practiced solitude as a way of creating space to listen for God's voice, examine their own hearts, and become more attentive to His presence in ordinary life.

You do not need perfect conditions to begin. Moments of solitude may be found over a cup of coffee, during the drive home from work, or in the quiet minutes before sleep. Solitude is less about *where you are* and more about *the posture you bring*.

What Solitude Is Not

When people hear the word *solitude*, they often imagine extreme versions of it.

A person alone on a remote trail. Days spent in complete silence.

Solitude is not isolation.

Isolation disconnects us from God, others, and ourselves. Solitude creates space to reconnect. While solitude is often practiced alone, its purpose is not separation but renewal.

Solitude is not escapism.

It is not a way to avoid difficult conversations, responsibilities, grief, or the realities of everyday life. We do not step away so that we can abandon life. We step away, for a time, so that we can return to it more fully.

Solitude is not a productivity hack.

Its purpose is not to help us accomplish more, optimize our schedules, or become more efficient. In a culture that often measures our worth by what we produce, solitude reminds us that our value is not found in constant activity.

Solitude is not a shortcut to spiritual maturity.

Spending time in solitude does not automatically make us wiser, holier, or closer to God. At times, solitude may simply reveal how distracted, restless, anxious, or hurried we have become. This awareness can become an invitation toward humility and deeper dependence on God.

Solitude is not about a perfect experience.

Some days it may bring clarity and peace. Other days it may feel uncomfortable or ordinary.

The practice is not about getting it right. It is about showing up with honesty and attentiveness.

Intentional solitude is not an escape from life. It is a way of becoming more present within it.

Solitude in Scripture

Throughout Scripture, we find people stepping away from the noise and demands around them, not to escape life, but to encounter God within it. Moses met God in the wilderness before leading others through it. What began as an ordinary day became an invitation to remove his sandals and pay attention. Again and again, the wilderness became a place where he learned dependence, received direction, and remembered who God was. David often turned toward God in lonely places. Whether hiding in caves, tending sheep, or pouring out his heart through prayer, he brought both his worship and his weariness before God with honesty.

Solitude did not remove his struggles, but it created space to meet God within them.

Elijah encountered God in a season of exhaustion and fear. After dramatic displays of God's power, he discovered that the Lord's presence was not

always found in the spectacular. In his weariness, he learned to listen again.

And perhaps the clearest example is Jesus Himself. Though crowds surrounded Him and needs constantly pressed in, Jesus regularly withdrew to pray. Before important decisions, after demanding seasons of ministry, and in the midst of overwhelming expectations, He made space to be alone with the Father.

**Solitude was not an escape from His mission.
It prepared Him to return to it.**

The wilderness in Scripture is rarely comfortable. It is a place of uncertainty, testing, preparation, and dependence. Yet it is also a place of encounter. God does not wait for life to become quiet and uncomplicated before meeting His people. He meets them in deserts and caves, on mountainsides and lonely roads, in seasons of strength and seasons of exhaustion. Perhaps the invitation of Scripture is not to imitate every circumstance, but to notice the pattern:

Again and again, people made space to pay attention to God.

And again and again, God met them there.

- *Moses — Exodus 3*
- *David — Psalm 63*
- *Elijah — 1 Kings 19*
- *Jesus — Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16*

Why Practice Solitude?

Intentional solitude is not a formula.

It does not guarantee clarity, peace, or immediate answers. Some moments of solitude feel rich and meaningful. Others feel ordinary. Yet many people who practice solitude over time begin to notice subtle changes.

They become more attentive.

They notice what they might otherwise miss—both within themselves and around them. Thoughts that were drowned out by constant noise rise to the surface. Gratitude becomes easier to recognize. So do fear, impatience, grief, and longing.

They gain perspective.

Stepping away from distraction, even briefly, can remind us that not everything demanding our attention deserves it. What once felt urgent may prove less important, while what truly matters comes back into focus.

They discover rest.

Not simply the absence of activity, but the freedom to stop striving for a moment. To remember that

their worth is not determined by productivity, performance, or how much they accomplish.

They grow in humility.

Solitude often reveals how distracted, restless, or dependent on noise we have become. It reminds us of our limitations and our need for God. Rather than making us feel stronger, it can teach us to depend more deeply.

They return differently.

Perhaps this is one of solitude's greatest gifts. We step away for a time, not to escape our lives, but to re-enter them with greater attentiveness, compassion, and presence.

Intentional solitude does not change who God is. But it may change our awareness of Him.

It may change the way we notice the people around us.

It may change the way we inhabit the life we have been given.

And sometimes, that is enough to change everything.

Beginning Small

One of the most common misconceptions about solitude is that it requires ideal circumstances.

We imagine needing an empty schedule, a quiet cabin in the mountains, or an entire day set aside for reflection. We tell ourselves that we'll begin when life slows down, when the children are older, when work becomes less demanding, or when we finally have more time.

But most of us do not live in ideal circumstances.

And perhaps we never will.

The good news is that intentional solitude rarely begins with grand gestures. More often, it begins with small moments of attention woven into ordinary life.

A few quiet minutes with a journal before the day begins.

Reflecting before sleep.

Reading a portion of Scripture during a lunch break.

A short walk without headphones.

Turning off the radio during the drive home.

Sitting in the school pickup line without immediately reaching for distraction.
Leaving your phone behind while you sit on the porch with a cup of coffee.
These moments may seem insignificant. Yet many of the things that shape us most deeply begin in small and ordinary ways.
Over time, what begins as a few intentional moments may become something more. Not because we force it, but because we begin to recognize its value. We notice that these small pauses help us pay attention—to God, to ourselves, and to the life we have been given.
Sometimes we discover this in seasons of peace.
Sometimes we discover it in seasons of hardship, when the practices we once viewed as optional become anchors that sustain us.
You do not have to manufacture a profound experience.
You do not have to force your mind to become perfectly still.
You do not have to say the right words.
Simply begin by noticing.
Notice your thoughts.

Notice your surroundings.
Notice what rises to the surface when distraction is set aside.
Notice the presence of God in the ordinary moments of your day.
If your mind wanders, gently return.
If you feel restless, remain for another moment.
If it feels ordinary, do not assume that ordinary moments are wasted.
The invitation of solitude is not to start somewhere extraordinary.
It is simply to begin.

You do not need to wait for a different life to begin. You can begin with the life you have been given.

And as you learn to pay attention, you may discover that opportunities for solitude have been inviting you all along.

Common Challenges

If you begin practicing intentional solitude, you may be surprised by what you encounter.

Rather than immediate peace or clarity, you may discover restlessness. Silence can feel unfamiliar.

The mind wanders. Thoughts compete for attention. The urge to check a phone, turn on music, or fill the quiet can become difficult to ignore.

None of these experiences mean you are doing it wrong.

They simply reveal what has often been hidden beneath constant distraction.

You may encounter boredom.

In a culture shaped by endless entertainment and stimulation, even a few minutes of quiet can feel uncomfortable. We have grown accustomed to filling every empty space. Solitude invites us to resist that impulse, even briefly, and discover that silence does not have to be feared.

You may encounter anxiety.

Without the usual distractions, worries and unresolved thoughts sometimes rise to the surface. This can be unsettling.

Yet what emerges in solitude is not necessarily being created there. Often, it was already present and finally given room to be noticed.

You may feel unproductive.

Choosing stillness in a world that values efficiency can feel wasteful. You may wonder if you should be doing something more useful with your time. Solitude gently challenges the belief that our worth is determined by what we accomplish.

You may become discouraged.

Some days solitude will feel meaningful. Other days it may seem ordinary or difficult. Faithfulness is not measured by dramatic experiences. Like many practices that shape us over time, the fruit is often subtle and gradual.

Be patient with yourself.

Intentional solitude is not something to master. It is a practice of returning—returning your attention when it wanders, returning to God when you become distracted, returning again when the experience feels ordinary.

There is no perfect way to begin.

There is only the invitation to begin again.

First Steps

If you've made it this far, you may be wondering where to begin.

The answer is simple:

Begin small.

Choose one small moment this week to practice intentional solitude.

You might sit quietly with a cup of coffee before the day begins.

You might take a short walk without headphones.

You might turn off the radio during your drive home.

You might set aside five minutes before bed to reflect on the day.

You might leave your phone behind while sitting on the porch or waiting in the pickup line.

There is no perfect place to start.

Choose what is realistic.

Choose what fits within the life you are already living. Then, simply pay attention.

Notice what draws your attention and what distracts it.

Notice what thoughts rise to the surface.

Notice moments of gratitude, restlessness, peace, longing, or concern.

Notice where you sense God's presence.

If the moment feels ordinary, let it be ordinary.

If your mind wanders, gently return.

If it feels awkward, do not assume you have failed.

The goal is not to achieve a particular experience.

It is simply to make space.

At the end of the week, ask yourself a few simple questions:

- What did I notice?
- What surprised me?
- What felt difficult?
- What made me want to return?

You do not need to have all the answers.

You do not need to overhaul your life.

You only need the willingness to begin.

The invitation of solitude is not to escape the life you have been given.

It is to become more attentive within it.

Take one small step.

Then another when you are ready.

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About Eremos

Eremos exists to create space for people to slow down, pay attention, and walk more intentionally with God.

Through shared experiences, thoughtful resources, and honest conversations, we hope to encourage deeper attentiveness to the presence of God in both the extraordinary and the ordinary moments of life.

If this booklet resonated with you, we'd be honored to walk with you further.

Learn more at:

<https://eremostn.org>

Questions or reflections can be shared at:

eremostn@gmail.com