

O SOLITUDE!

IF I MUST WITH THEE DWELL

O solitude! If I must with thee dwell,
Let it not be among the jumbled heap
Of murky buildings: climb with me the steep,-
Nature's observatory -whence the dell,
In flowery slopes, it's river's crystal swell,
May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
'Mongst boughs pavilions, where the deer's swift leap
Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell.
But though I will gladly trace these scenes with thee,
Yet the sweet converse of the innocent mind,
Whose words are images of thoughts refined,
Is my souls pleasure; and it sure must be
Almost the highest bliss of human-kind,
When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

John Keats

(1795-1821)



SOLITUDE

Being Alone with God

What is Solitude?

Basically solitude is being alone. It is the absence of distractions like people, computers, schoolwork, television, cell phones, radio, etc. Solitude can be getting away from everybody in a weekend retreat or just locking yourself in your room for an hour in peaceful quiet. The reason solitude is a spiritual discipline is that "alone time" can often be a more difficult task than we think. It takes effort to be sure you are not disturbed.

Why Do We Avoid Solitude?

The simplest and most common reason we avoid being alone with God is that solitude forces us to face everything in our lives head on. This internal confrontation is often why solitude is one of the most difficult spiritual disciplines. Yet, without time alone with God the aspects of our lives that need the most work often go ignored or unseen.

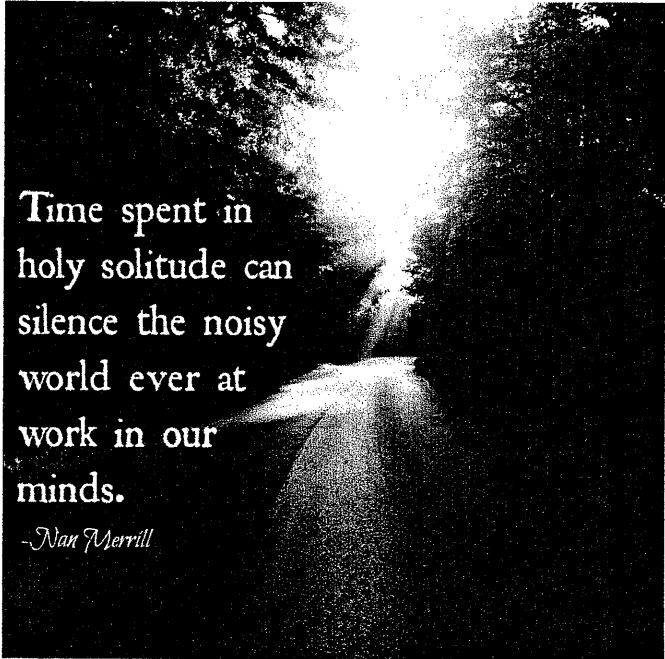
Why is Solitude Important?

It is when we are most by ourselves that we realize God is actually right there with us. At that point the solitude allows us to grow closer to God as we begin to address the things going on in our lives, thoughts, and existence. We are able to see clearly, through a Godly perspective, what is im-

portant in our lives.

But How Do I Find Time for Solitude?

We live in busy, busy world where time alone is not always rewarded. So, solitude does take effort and persistence. While sometimes we think of solitude as long periods of meditation, often we have to be creative about it. Sometimes we may only have a few minutes to be alone with God. We may find a few minutes before we get out of bed in the morning, on the walk to the bus stop, or in a peaceful corner during study hour. There is a reason that solitude is a spiritual discipline, and we all have to work hard to be sure we are getting that "alone time" with God.



Time spent in
holy solitude can
silence the noisy
world ever at
work in our
minds.

-Nan Merrill

The Power of Solitude

Solitude is the most powerful activity in which you can engage. Men and women who practice it correctly and on a regular basis never fail to be amazed at the difference it makes in their lives.

Most people have never practiced solitude. Most people have never sat down quietly by themselves for any length of time in their entire lives. Most people are so busy being busy, doing something — even watching television — that it's highly unusual for them to simply sit, deliberately, and do nothing.

Your job is to relax and listen to your inner voice. At a certain stage during your period of solitude, the solutions to the most pressing difficulties facing you will emerge quietly and clearly, like a boat putting in gently to the side of a lake. The answer that you seek will come to you so clearly — and it will feel so perfect — that you'll experience a deep sense of gratitude and contentment.

Whatever it is, when you follow the guidance that you received in solitude, it will turn out to be exactly the right thing to do. Everything will be okay. And it will usually work out far better than you could have imagined.