



GOD VIEWS

My Contract for Solitude

Take a few moments to fill out this contract for the practice of solitude during the coming week. Yeah, it's hokey. But it might just work.

CONTRACT ITEM

FULLFILLMENT

■ Time

It is important to find a time of day (30 minutes minimum, but the longer the better) during which you can be sure that no phones or people will be ringing for your attention. In the space to the right, please list the day of the week and time of day you plan to enjoy solitude this next week. (e.g., Monday, 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.)

(When?)

■ Place

Please be specific about the place where you will experience solitude. (e.g., living room, back porch, picnic table by lake, park, prayer room at church, retreat center).

(Where?)

■ Activity

You may find it helpful to begin your time of solitude before God by reading a passage of Scripture that presents some of the benefits of this practice or a passage that helps you to rest in God's provisions. For example:

(What?)

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- Psalm 23 (especially verses 1-3) provides images of the spiritual refreshment God gives us in quietness.
- Ecclesiastes 5:1-2 contrasts rash speech with reverent silence.
- Isaiah 30:15 declares the profound importance of rest and quietness.



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- Zephaniah 3:7 identifies the nature of the inner fulfillment that may be found in solitude.

But you will also want to allow twenty minutes or more of time for being quiet before God, in restful anticipation of hearing His voice.

In the space to the right, please indicate a special passage of Scripture you plan to enjoy in solitude.

■ Accountability

Having an accountability partner (someone who will ask if we followed through with our plans) will increase the chance that we will actually take the time for solitude from our busy schedules. Have someone who will agree to ask you how it went next week to sign on the line to the right.

(Who?)

■ Impact

Nouwen suggests that Christians discover many freedoms in the practice of solitude. List the potential freedom (from the list below) that you would most enjoy receiving.

(Result?)

In solitude we may:

- Discover that the love we express is but a small part of a much greater love.
- Become aware that our worth is not the same as our usefulness.
- Discover that our life is not a possession to be defended but a gift to be shared.
- Unmask the illusion that we must be in control.

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Personal Reflection

Take a few minutes to read the following poem concerning the mystery of the incarnation.

Incarnation

*All-Powerful God,
Helpless in a manger.*

*Omniscient Mind,
Between the ears of a toddler.*

*Light of the World,
Casting shadows on the dirt.*

*Omnipresent King,
Traveling by foot.*

*Creator of the Universe,
Swinging a hammer.*

*Source of Living Water,
Parched in the wilderness.*

*Lion of Judah,
Lamb of God.*

*Author of Truth,
Accused by liars.*

*Prince of Peace,
Beaten by soldiers.*

*The Word of God,
Edited and erased.*

*The Author of Life,
Dead.*

*Light of the World,
Shining again, from a dark tomb.*

*Your Real Daddy,
Signing your adoption papers with His blood.*

*All-Powerful God,
Wrapped in swaddling clothes,*

*Becoming like us for awhile,
So that we can be like you forever.*

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Bible Study

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

*⁶Who being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with
God something to be
grasped,*

*⁷but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

*⁸And being found in appearance as a
man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

*⁹Therefore God exalted him to the
highest place
and gave him the name that is
above every name,*

*¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee
should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under
the earth,*

*¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus
Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

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1 Being “united with Christ,” in Paul’s teaching suggests a personal union or connection with Jesus. It was implied in any language of salvation. To be “in Christ” is to be saved. To be “in Christ” suggests an ongoing, moment-by-moment, intimate and personal relationship with Jesus.

What do you believe a deeper appreciation of “union” with Christ would add to the understanding of being saved?

2 How does the practice of solitude (wasting lots of time with God) relate to the concept of union with Christ?

3 How does selfish ambition express itself in your life?

4 The “Hymn of Christ” (Philippians 2:5-11) describes Christ’s humility and radical obedience that are reflected in the incarnation. If this hymn were to become the theme song of your life (emptying yourself for the sake of others), how would this cause you to live tomorrow differently?



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Transparency

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Session Outline

I. INTRODUCTION



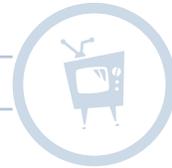
- Welcome
- Prayer
- Review

II. WARM-UP



- Exercises and Discussion
- Retelling of the Lesson Synopsis

III. CONTENT



- Video Vignette
- Class Response
- Question/Discussion/Exercise

IV. BIBLE STUDY



- Small Groups or All Together

V. SUMMARY



- Review