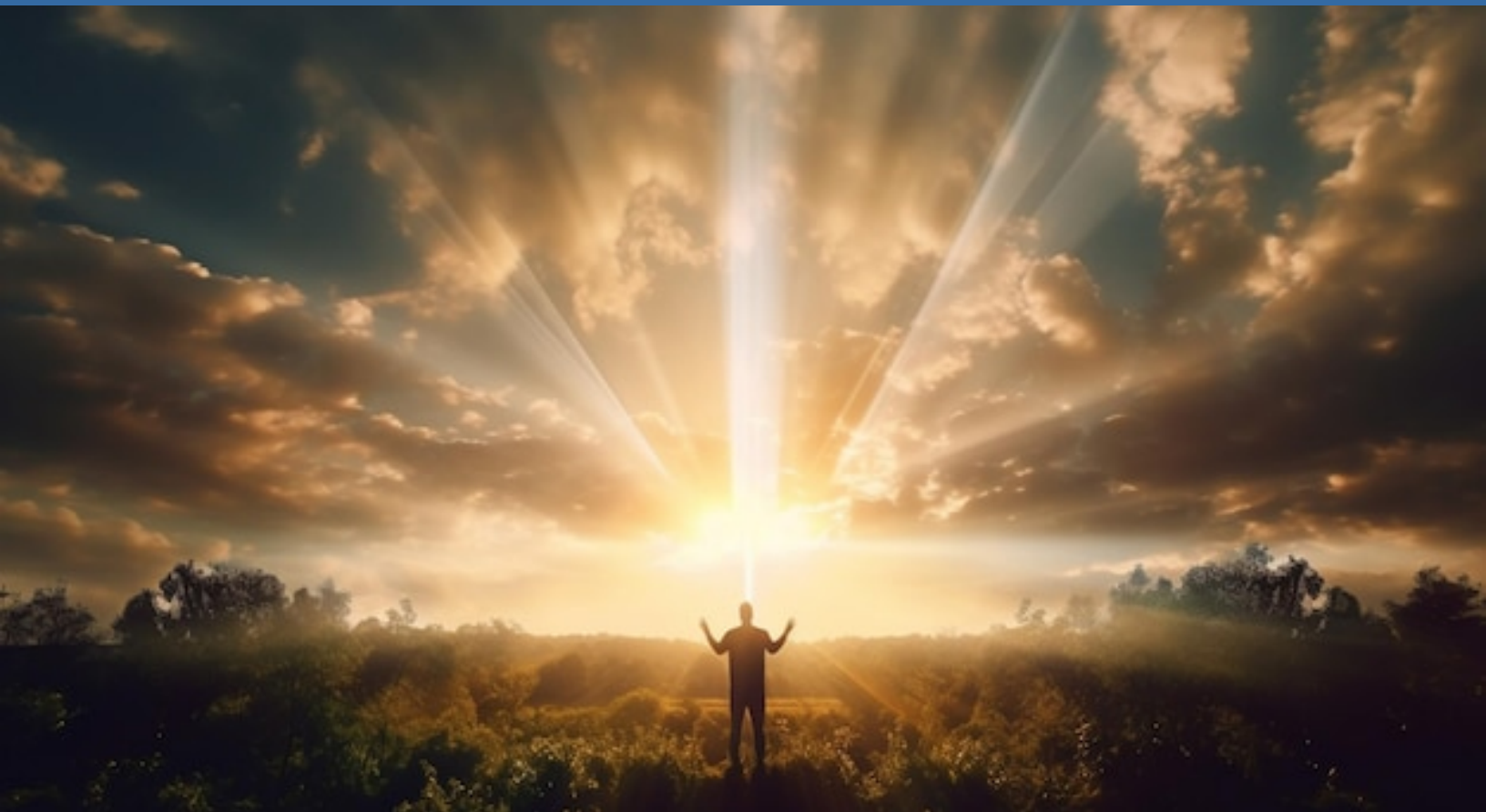


# Solitude & Silence 06

Knowing God and Self



Weston Brooks



## INTRODUCTION

*The vast majority of us go to our graves without knowing who we are. Without being fully aware of it, we live someone else's life, or at least someone else's expectations for us. As a result, we end up doing violence to ourselves, our relationship with God, and ultimately to others.*

- Pete Scazzero

David Banner writes, "people who have never developed a deep personal knowing of God will be limited in the depth of their personal knowing of themselves. Failing to know God, they will be unable to know themselves, as God is the only context in which their being makes sense. Similarly, people who are afraid to look deeply at themselves will of course be equally afraid to look deeply at God. For such persons, ideas about God provide a substitute for direct experience of God."

There is a lot packed into that paragraph. But Christianity has a long record of understanding there is an important connection between knowing God and knowing ourselves. One cannot proceed very far without the other. We come to know both God and ourselves through an intimate relationship with God. And an intimate relationship with God is accompanied by personal experiences with God.

And these personal experiences help us see who God is and help us understand who we are in His eyes. Peter, one of Jesus' first disciples, has been a universally loved character by Christians throughout history. Why? Probably because he is deeply flawed, yet also deeply loved by Jesus. He is the classic example of someone who failed Jesus, yet Jesus responds by restoring Peter and using Him mightily. In his flaws and failures he is relatable. And seeing Jesus love and use him anyways gives us hope and comfort.

And fortunately, we are given some details about his relationship with Jesus. In these stories we see a man who comes to know God and himself through his relationship with Jesus. Peter's transformation through these stories is remarkable. And that is the point! People who come to know God for who He truly is and come to know their true identity in Christ are profoundly changed through God's love and grace.

## THE PRACTICE OF SOLITUDE

Find a quiet and comfortable place in your home or outside in nature. Do not bring anything with you except a Bible and journal. Make sure your phone (and any other device or possible distraction) is in a different room and not with you.

This week we are going to expand on Lectio Divina and practice what is often called Gospel Meditations (see page 3 for description).

### Daily Routine

**Start with breathe prayer**

#### **Rest in God's love**

- Once you feel "quieted," spend a few minutes just resting in God's love for you.
- Let the Holy Spirit make his presence known to you - body, soul and spirit. Just soak in his love, peace and joy. Let God love you.
- Don't try to make anything happen or control the experience – just be with God.

#### **Gospel Meditation**

- see page 4 for a description. Select a passage from the reading list on page 4 and read slowly, using your imagination to put yourself in the scene with Jesus.

#### **Write**

- Record your thoughts and/or insights

#### **Gratitude**

- Close your time with gratitude for God's presence and love

## GOSPEL MEDITATION

This practice is a Spirit guided meditation on one of the stories from Jesus' life for the purpose of developing friendship with Jesus. Gospel Meditation provides an opportunity to enter specific moments in Jesus' life and thereby share His experience. Shared experience is an important part of friendship.

This is not a Bible study on the story. Rather it is an exercise of the imagination that allows the Spirit of God to help you enter an event from the life of Jesus as presented in the Gospels. Here are the basic steps:

**Quiet yourself.** Take a moment to quiet yourself in God's presence. Ask God to take the words of Scripture and by His Spirit make them His words to you. Ask for a Spirit guided encounter with Jesus.

**Select a story to read.** Select one of your favorite stories of Jesus from the Gospels or select one from the list on the following page.

**Slowly read the story.** Preferably out loud.

**Imagine yourself in the scene.** Allow your imagination to put yourself in the scene as an observer. Observe the events as they unfold. Don't try to analyze or study the event. Just be present to Jesus and open to your own reactions.

**Focus on Jesus.** Do not allow yourself to be distracted by others in the scene. Put your focus on Jesus and be attentive to Him.

Remember, this is an exercise designed to help you learn to gaze upon Jesus as the Divine Image. One of the ways we come to know Him is just by looking at Him.

## GOSPEL MEDITATION SCRIPTURES

Matthew 8:5-13	Jesus heals the Centurion's servant
Matthew 9:27-31	Jesus heals two blind men
Mark 10:17-22	The Rich Young Ruler
Mark 7:31-37	Healing of deaf man
Mark 5:21-34	Jesus heals a sick woman
Mark 7:24-30	Jesus and the Syrophenician woman
Luke 5:1-11	The First Disciples
Luke 17:11-19	Healing of 10 Lepers
Luke 19:1-9	Zaccheus
John 3:1-21	Nicodemus
John 4:1-30	The woman at the well
John 6:41-51	I am the Bread of Life
John 8:37-39	Jesus teaches at the Temple during festivals

Or pick one of your favorite stories of Jesus from the Gospels to meditate on.







## APPENDIX

### Extended Solitude

As mentioned at the beginning, we are encouraging you to participate in an extended period of silence and solitude. Here are goals to aim for:

- Ideally 6-8 hours
- No phone, email, TV, work, etc
- Find a spot where you can be alone and uninterrupted. If possible, go away to a cabin, beach house, park, or retreat center.

Like many things in life, this is going to take some planning. Try to arrange your day so you can be uninterrupted and remain in silence from the time you wake up until the time you finish. The following is a suggested schedule for how to spend the 8 hours:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 8 - 9 AM      | Prepare your mind and heart. Take a walk or do whatever will help you set aside concerns over tasks and responsibilities. You can also spend part of this time writing down any thoughts that come about things you have to take care of after your retreat to help you clear your mind for the day. |
| 9 - 11 AM     | Read and meditate on Scripture, taking time to stop and reflect when God seems to be speaking to you through the text.   |
| 11 AM - 12 PM | Write down responses to what you have read. Speak to God about them.   |
| 12 - 1 PM     | Eat lunch and take a walk, reflecting on the morning.  |
| 1 - 2 PM      | Take a nap / rest  |
| 2 - 3 PM      | Set goals that emerge from the day's reflection.   |
| 3 - 4 PM      | Write down these goals and other thoughts in a journal. Thank God for your time together and ask if there is anything else he wants to say. Prepare to enter back into the flow of life.   |

## **RESOURCES**

*The Gift of Being Yourself*

by David Benner



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