



Dear test person:

Dear ministry partners; Please be praying for the Holy Spirit to use the following Bible study in the lives of our Federal Lawmakers this coming week. This particular study is about the need to develop a consistent time alone with God. Feel free to email it along to other friends of yours. Blessings, Ralph

One thing that is redundantly apparent while making rounds to your offices is the tremendous time demands on federal lawmakers. Many of you put in 16 hours a day while you're on the Hill, to say nothing of what life is like in the district. It is easy to blame a lack of private, secluded time for personal development on your vocation, but what I have found in ministry is that many who are attracted to office love public time and have difficulty developing private time. I put myself in this category: we love public interaction and have difficulty prioritizing alone time—spending time with God in prayer and meditating on His Word. Jesus however, as much as He loved people, managed to strike a disciplined balance. In this week's passage He models this for us.

INTRODUCTION

During the past two weeks of study in the book of Mark, I have emphasized his use of various incidences in the life of Jesus that are intended to build His credibility, and stemming from that, His efficacy to save one from their sins. In the first verses of this week's study (29 to 34) the same pattern emerges. We witness Jesus healing Simon's mother-in-law.[i][1] One would think that if Jesus were God incarnate, He could heal the sick, and He does in the first portion of this week's passage. Earlier in this passage we have witnessed (last week's outline) Jesus encountering Angels, proclaiming the gospel, recruiting disciples (notice in this passage they are now traveling with him), teaching with authority and rebuking the Devil. All are necessary actions if you're going to claim to be God the Savior. Mark has written skillfully to support that claim. The remaining portion of this passage, verses 35 to 37, is where I would like to draw our attention this week.

THE PASSAGE: MARK 1:29-37

29 And immediately after they had come out of the synagogue, they came into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law was lying sick with a fever; and immediately they spoke to Him about her. 31 And He came to her and raised her up, taking her by the hand, and the fever left her, and she waited on them. 32 And when evening had come, after the sun had set, they began bringing to Him all who were ill and those who were demon-possessed. 33 And the whole city had gathered at the door. 34 And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was. 35 And in the early morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place,

and was praying there. 36 And Simon and his companions hunted for Him; 37 and they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You."

**HOW OFTEN DO PEOPLE HUNT YOU DOWN AND SAY SOMETHING LIKE,
"EVERYONE IS LOOKING FOR YOU!"**

I. THE MODEL OF SOLITUDE: PRINCE OF PEACE MK 1:35-37

Notice closely two of the three verbs in verses 36 and 37. (I'll come back to verse 35). **Simon** (Peter, the Apostle) **and his companions hunted** *katadioko* for Jesus. States Edwards, "This seemingly innocuous intrusion and Peter's more infamous opposition in 8:32-33^[ii][2]...are curiously alike. In both passages Simon Peter is the only disciple named, and in both he tries to prevent Jesus from fulfilling his mission. In both instances the chief apostle is found to be the chief antagonist to God's Son."^[iii][3] Studying out Markian use of the third Greek verb in this passage, **looking for** *zeteo* proves to be quite insightful. The word occurs ten-fold in this gospel and each time it carries a negative connotation. In 1:37 and 3:32 it infers obstruction to Jesus' God-given purposes.^[iv][4] The word can also be translated "demanding or striving" and infers an attempt to determine and control rather than submit and follow. Sound familiar? People pressured Jesus to forfeit His time of solitude.

THIS SMALL BIBLE PASSAGE ILLUSTRATES A BIG POINT:

**REGULAR AWAY TIME IS NOT ONLY DIFFICULT TO ACQUIRE, IT IS MORE
DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN**

Have you given up on seeking quiet time away with the Heavenly Father? Is the tyranny^[v][5] of the urgent the new reigning lord of your life? Have you bowed the knee to Microsoft Outlook®? Verse 35 states that **in the early morning while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place and was praying there.**

Notice for yourself from this passage three facilitative aspects necessary to achieve an effective time of solitude:

THE RIGHT PERIOD. Jesus arose **early in the morning**. As a legislator you probably do not sleep long anyway, so use your first awakened hours to pray. This is the best time to find solace and your mind is sharpest after you've slept.

THE RIGHT PLACE. The point Mark is making with the four verbs in this passage isn't so much that Jesus **arose** and **went out** as much as it is the fact that He **departed** (from others). The first two verbs facilitate the third. This understanding is underscored by the end result: achieving a **lonely**

place *eremos* to commune with God. Cf. Lk. 5:16. All said, one idea is to pray in bed if it's too cold to get up. Scripture speaks not about the posture of the body when it comes to prayer as much as it does the attitude of the heart.

THE RIGHT PRIORITY. In His solitude He **was praying**. Pray before Bible study or fellowshiping with others. He may prompt your heart which will affect your study and/or interactions with others. God wants to commune with those who have made peace with Him through the cross of Christ.

Now please allow me to expand on this and build more insights, a larger biblical theology, and argumentation for solitude as modeled by Jesus (who had more people pressing in on Him every day than we could imagine). My intent is to persuade you to once again prioritize the need for consistent solitude. Here's how you can be more like Jesus today.

II. THE MERIT OF SOLITUDE: PERSPECTIVE Luke 4:42

And when day came, He departed and went to a lonely place; and the multitudes were searching for Him, and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from going away from them.

This is Luke's parallel passage of the same event in Mark. Notice here, as in Mark 1:38, that Jesus had a higher purpose than those of Peter or the multitudes'. To fulfill His calling, Jesus had to go and preach the gospel in other cities. Point: What has God called you to do? Without regular alone-time with your Heavenly Father will you or could you lose sight of your God-given objectives and morph into the purposes of others around you? Solitude is how Jesus combated vocational drift. It will help you too, to maintain perspective.

III. THE MIGHT OF SOLITUDE: PRINCIPLED MATTHEW 14:23

And after He had sent the multitudes away, He went up to the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.

It is estimated that the Galilean multitudes exceeded 25,000 people; and they were panting for Him to be their King. Notice how deliberate and disciplined Jesus was in light of that: prioritizing personal communion with His Father. He was disciplined to be **alone** *monos* (cf. John 6:15; Mark 6:46).

**IF 25,000 PEOPLE WERE PRESENT WHO DESIRED YOU TO SEEK OFFICE,
COULD YOU TELL THEM TO GO AWAY BECAUSE YOU WANTED SOME TIME
ALONE?**

JESUS DID.

Jesus was principled; He had the might to maintain solitude.

IV. THE MEASURE OF SOLITUDE: PROLONGATION LUKE 6:12

And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

Do not short-change God on the amount of time you spend communing with Him, after all He is your maker, sustainer and friend. If you will constantly work to prolong your time of solitude with Him you will become more like Him.

APPLICATION

As you can glean from this study, there are many great benefits from solitude—solitude with the Savior, not solitude with self. Find a place where early in the morning you can prioritize prayer and Bible study to begin your day right. Jesus models this for us in this week's passage. Time alone with His Father fueled His ministry. You too will benefit in your call to public office achieving greater clarity and consistency, personal power and heavenly communion. Most important, you will grow to be more like Christ. Akin to the discipline of an athlete in the weight room, there are no short cuts to spiritual maturity. One needs to daily develop their heart for God by spending uninterrupted time with Him. I trust these expositional Bible studies will aid in that. Let me know if I can assist you in anyway. I'm at your service 24-7-365. My mobile # is 661-803-7970. May God richly bless you this week as you seek His face.



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[i][1] The reference is to the Apostle Peter's mother-in-law, and if you remember from earlier study notes, Mark is writing herein Peter's account of the life of Christ. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law right after he left his profession by faith to follow Him—an immediate blessing for Peter's faith and obedience.

[ii][2] Mark 8:32-33: "And He was stating the matter plainly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But turning around and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter and said, Get behind me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's." Beware: others have their own agenda for you.

[iii][3] James R. Edwards *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar NT Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) p. 66

[iv][4] In 8:11 and 8:12 the word refers to disbelief and unfaithfulness. The remaining occurrences refer to attempts to kill Jesus (11:18; 12:12; 14:1; 14:55).

[v][5] M&W: 3 a : oppressive, severe, and unjust domination