

Growing Leaders Crave Silence and Solitude

When was the last time you had meaningful time alone?

No meetings, no appointments. No phone buzzing. No music in your ear buds. No distractions.

Just **stillness. Solitude.**

My guess is **for many of us the answer is it's been a while.**

What if I told you that your effectiveness and maybe even your longevity as a leader depended directly on finding and establishing regular periods of solitude?

Ever notice that:

> Jesus prepared for 30 years and taught for three? That's a 10 to 1 ratio of preparation to execution. We do the opposite.

> Even when Jesus was teaching, he would just disappear to pray or to be alone?

I think **Jesus modeled the truth that solitude is essential for impact.**

As a driven leader who for many years was an extrovert (I'm a little more introverted now), I used to resist solitude.

I saw downtime as unproductive time and was uncomfortable if I sat still for more than 10 minutes. I would actually invent something to do just to break the silence.

But, thankfully, over the years I've learned to make peace with silence.

Since that truce happened, I've learned so much more about myself and about what God wants to do in my heart and my life.

Now I crave silence and solitude.

In fact, I think the most effective leaders seek it out and see it as essential to tuning up the most important aspects of leadership.

8 Things Solitude Can Do For You as a Leader

1. Reveal how you're really doing. The quiet outside will reveal the quiet or disquiet within you.

- 2. Help you discover what is most meaningful and important.** The unexamined life is not worth living (Socrates).
- 3. Give you insight into your character.** Silence and prayer have a way of revealing the truth about who you are. And [as I outlined in this post](#), that's critically important because ultimately, character, not competency, determines your capacity.
- 4. Give you energy.** Like exercise, practicing the discipline of solitude gives you energy.
- 5. Let you actually hear from God.** You can only really hear from God when you've slowed down enough to listen. For me, when I do my slowest readings of scripture, I hear from God the most clearly.
- 6. Renew intimacy.** Intimacy isn't possible in a rush. True intimacy (with people or with God) only happens when no one's in a hurry.
- 7. Establish priorities.** Solitude accelerates clarity.
- 8. Restore your soul.** If you've lost your soul, solitude will help you find it. If it's out of balance, solitude can help you restore it.

5 Do-able Ways to Find Solitude

While the pattern of solitude might look slightly different for all of us, **here are 5 doable ways for busy leaders to carve out solitude in the rhythm of every day life:**

- 1. Get up earlier.** Even if it's just 15 minutes earlier than you get up now, starting your day earlier allows you stillness that will otherwise elude you for the rest of the day. I get up every day between 4:45-5:30 a.m. so I have solitude before anything else begins. Not a morning person? [Michael Hyatt's free podcast](#) on how to become a morning person is classic. (If you just don't want to become a morning person, then stay up later to find solitude.)
- 2. Calendar solitude.** I intentionally book very few meetings on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. My perfect week has none. That's because I bring the highest value as a leader when I'm working on the ministry I lead, not in it. You can get so lost in the details of managing a ministry that you stop leading it. When you book free days (start with just one if you have to), you give yourself time to pray, think, reflect, imagine, dream, poke, kick and rethink.
- 3. Find a hobby you do alone.** For me, it's cycling. 80% of the time, I ride alone. No one interrupts me. The movement in my body kick-starts movement in my mind. Some of my best ideas have come when I'm cycling. Other leaders I know choose photography, running, kayaking, hiking or other hobbies. Even if you start with an hour a week, it will clear your mind.
- 4. Take a personal retreat.** I haven't done this often, but at critical times I've borrowed a

cottage (lake house), rented a suite or just gotten away to clear my mind. Even a day can do wonders.

5. Take a mid-day break. Turn the music off, turn off your phone and go sit somewhere. Even for ten minutes. Find a park bench. Sit by yourself at Starbucks. Sit in the shade in your car. When you are still, you will know that God is God.

What's your relationship with solitude like? Do you find it valuable? And how do you make time for it?

Read more from Carey [here](#).