



# Solitude Guide

Anxious &  
Overwhelmed.... pg. 2

There are many different things that keep us from intimacy with God. Sometimes we are like Martha, anxious and worried about many things (Luke 10:41). Sometimes we are like David, weighed down by the sins that we're too afraid to talk about (Psalm 32:3). Sometimes we're clueless like Cornelius; we believe in God but just need someone to show us how to know Him (Acts 10). Sometimes our faith is dry and our hearts are cold.

Guilt-ridden..... pg. 4

Depending on where you find yourself today will determine what page you should start on. If you feel anxious and overwhelmed, whether it's term papers or laundry, marriage troubles or fears of eternal singleness, aging bodies or aging parents, then start on page 2.

Clueless.....pg. 7

Maybe you may already know why you don't like spending time alone with God. It's because in the quiet all those hidden sins creep into your mind. That subtle feeling of guilt you can't put your finger on eclipses God's goodness. If that's you, start on page 4.

Discouraged &  
Defeated.....pg. 9

Or maybe the idea of an hour alone with a Bible and journal is just intimidating! What in the world do I do? What passage should I read? Am I waiting for some special feeling? If you just feel a bit clueless, then start on page 7.

If you feel discouraged, defeated, and dry; if you feel like you're in a never-ending desert; if your desire for God is non-existent, then start on page 9.

# Anxious & Overwhelmed

## 1. Cast Your Anxiety on Him

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, **casting all your anxieties** on him, because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:6-7

Before you do anything else, write out all that is heavy on your mind. It doesn't matter how big or small the item is. It could be as small as a pile of laundry awaiting you at home or a project due next week. The point is, those things on your mind are like noise keeping you from hearing God's still small voice.

So use a journal if you have one. Or you can use the blank page at the back of this packet. As you write each item down, let it symbolize a handing off. Take it off of your shoulders and give it to God.

Once you have completed your list, ask God to show you any other things that may be subconsciously weighing you down, things you might not think about every day. Write anything else down that comes to mind. Remember, no item is too small.

## 2. Say Hi to God

It may sound silly, but it's helpful to remember that our God is a person, not a system. He has a personality, likes and dislikes, joys and sorrows. Take a few minutes to talk with Him as you would a friend sitting next to you. Treat God the way you would like to be treated: be honest with Him, don't be in a hurry when you talk to Him, and leave space to listen.

If you feel comfortable, talk to Him out loud. Or write your words down in a journal, like you are writing a letter.

## 3. Read Psalm 27

Read slowly, underlining words that stand out to you. Now read it a second time. Did you notice anything new?

Pick 1 verse that stood out to you the most. Write it down in your journal or on this page. Then write down **why** this verse caught your attention.

Read the psalm a 3rd time, this time using it as a script for prayer. For example, praying verse 1 may sound like, "God you are my light! You have saved me! Please help me not to fear. Help me believe that you are my stronghold, my defense. I am tired of trusting my own strength."

## 4. What is your One Thing?

In verse 4, David makes a big declaration. He asks God for only one thing. A desire that rises above everything else. What is the request? To see the Lord and be with Him.

But the Lord answered here, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but **one thing** is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her.

Luke 10:41-42

Take a moment to be honest and ask yourself, what is the one request rising to the surface of your life? Is it to get your to do list done? To be reconciled to your spouse? To get a day away from the kids? To be a certain weight or at a certain level of health? To be financially stable?

If you aren't sure, ask God to "search you and know your heart" (Psalm 139:23) and wait a few moments to see if He brings something to your mind.

## 5. Read Luke 12:15-32

In this passage Jesus tells His disciples not to worry. But before that, He tells them a parable about a man concerned with earthly security. God calls the man a fool because he was serving the urgent (what was in front of him) and not the eternal.

How do you see a tendency in yourself to serve the urgent and not the eternal?

What is the antidote for this problem? (Verse 31) What do you think this could look like in your life practically?

## 6. Repent & Rest

Read Isaiah 30:15. Write it out.

Our wise and merciful God has designed our salvation to be found in **returning** to Him and **resting** in Him. He has decided true strength will be found in **quietness** and **trust**. But, like the Israelites to whom this was first written to, we are often unwilling to accept these terms.

Read the result of this unwillingness in Isaiah 30:16-17. How many times is the verb "flee" used?

What is the result of not accepting God's terms for salvation and strength (verse 15)? The imagery is exhausting! Constant activity, exaggerated fears and anxiety ("a thousand flee at the threat of one"). It is the opposite of quietness and rest. When we refuse to return to God and rest in His work for us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we also experience exhaustion and overactive anxieties.

Take a moment to return to God (this is called repentance) by acknowledging the things you have been running to. Agree with God that this is sin: loving, serving, and trusting something above God. Ask Him to save you, because He alone can change your heart. Now read about God's posture toward you in Isaiah 30:18-26 and list what you learn about His character in your journal.

Before you leave this moment, take 10 minutes to just be quiet. To do nothing. To just be. Let it be an offering to God, one that says "Because Jesus did all the work, I can just rest."

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but **the things that are unseen are eternal.**

2 Corinthians 4:18

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **Set your minds on things that are above**, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:1-3

The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to **be silent.**

Exodus 14:14

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that **while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 5:6-11

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

2 Corinthians 5:21

# Weighed Down with Guilt & Shame

## 1. What's Holding You Back?

What's keeping you from bringing all the sin, the guilt, the shame into the light of the presence of God? When you think about putting words to what you've done and what's been done to you, what stops you? Take a few minutes to list all the reasons that come to mind. Use your journal or the blank pages at the back of this packet.

## 2. Read Psalm 62

Read slowly, underlining words that stick out to you. Now read it a second time. Did you notice anything new?

Pick 1 verse that stood out to you the most. Write it down in your journal or on this page. Then write down **why** this verse caught your attention.

Read the psalm a 3rd time, this time using it as a script for prayer. For example, praying verse 1 may sound like, "God, I'm terrified to wait on you in silence. I've asked you to save me before, but you didn't. I want to believe you are my rock, help me see who you really are."

## 3. Jesus was Poured Out for Us

Sometimes we're afraid to pour out our hearts to God and others because of the repercussions. If we actually said out loud what we had done, could we handle the shame? Would we get in trouble? If we put words to the evil done to us, would others think differently of us?

Interestingly, the Hebrew verb used in Psalm 62:8 ("pour out") is most often used to talk about blood being *poured out*, or blood being *shed*. You can see examples of this in Exodus 29:12, Deuteronomy 12:27 and Psalm 106:38.

Read Matthew 26:26-28. Circle the verb "poured out" in your Bible.

Because Jesus poured out His blood, we can now pour out our hearts in God's presence without the threat of His wrath coming down on us. Being honest with God would be a dangerous thing if not for Jesus' blood poured out to cover our sinful, messy hearts.

Take a minute to talk to God about how you feel about this. Are you hesitant to receive this gift of forgiveness? Do you feel the need to make up for what you've done? Is His offer of forgiveness good news to you? Are you excited?

## 4. Read Psalm 32:1-7

What sins are you keeping silent about? Do you resonate with David's description of what it feels like to keep silent about sin?

Written by Kelly Needham; go to [kellyneedham.com](http://kellyneedham.com) for more resources

As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was speaking in her heart; only her lips moved, and her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli took her to be a drunken woman. And Eli said to her, "How long will you go on being drunk? Put your wine away from you." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman troubled in spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been **pouring out my soul before the LORD**. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition that you have made to him."

1 Samuel 1:12-17

For you have died, and your life is **hidden with Christ** in God.

Colossians 3:3

Make a list of key words or phrases that describe areas of your life you are avoiding talk to God and others about. For example, your list may look like: "That thing last summer, Europe trip, things my cousin did to me, dad stuff, my 1st baby." If you want, write it on the blank paper at the end of this packet so you can throw it away later.

### **5. Pour Out Your Heart**

Now, with the blood of Christ as your covering, put words to that list. Talk to God about each item on the list.

Be specific.

Be brutally honest.

He already knows, nothing is a surprise to Him. This is not a calculated, measured pouring out. Imagine pouring out the contents of a pitcher of water on the ground. These things cannot heal until they are in the light of His presence.

### **6. Thank Jesus for the Cross**

Every sin deserves death. And God will not allow a sin to go unpunished. The reason you can rest is because Jesus was punished in your place. The righteous for the unrighteousness. The pure for the impure. The just for the unjust. Take a few minutes to consider this and thank Him for the unfathomable gift His death and resurrection is!

### **7. Thank Jesus for His Resurrection**

If Jesus was still dead, it would be proof that your sins were more powerful than Jesus. It would be proof that the guilt and shame of your life is the most important thing about you. BUT, He isn't dead! He came back to life! And Jesus's resurrected body is the proof that He is stronger than our sin, that He stands on top of the grave of our sin victorious. Now, the most important thing about us is that we trust in Jesus and are IN HIM. Take a few minutes to think about what His resurrection means in your life. Thank Him that He is alive!

### **8. Read James 5:16**

We all like the second part of this verse, but not the first. Most of us would rather keep our sins and shame between us and God. But it isn't until they are brought into the light of God's people that true healing begins to take place. Why? Because Christians are the body of Christ, and letting other believers know brings our sin into the full light and healing of God's presence.

Write down 3 people who you can also share your list with. It's never wise to share with only one person as we can get too dependent on them. Instead,

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 1:7-10

think of 3 trustworthy people who also love Jesus. Text them today to let them know you need to talk to them sometime this week.

When you do talk, let them know you have things you've never told anyone that you need to bring into the light. Ask if they have time to listen. Then share honestly and specifically about your list and then ask them to pray for you that you would believe the Gospel, that the blood of Christ covers you and clothes you in the perfect righteousness of Christ Himself.

Before you leave this moment, take 10 minutes to just be quiet. To do nothing. To just be. Let it be an offering to God, one that says "Because Jesus did all the work, I can just rest."

# Clueless & Confused

## 1. Be Honest

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his c o m m a n d m e n t s . Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him:

1 John 2:3-5

The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Psalms 145:18

Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth."

Hosea 6:3

Maybe you just started following Jesus. Maybe you grew up around Christianity but never learned how to connect personally with God. Whatever the reason, being honest about where you are is the best place to start. It's tempting in Christian circles to act like we know what we're doing. We begin speaking the language, talking the talk, but privately God feels like a distant idea more than a close companion. We can know a lot **about** God, but that doesn't mean we **know God**. Begin breaking this pattern in your own life today.

Spend a few minutes taking an honest assessment of your spiritual life. Write it down in your journal or use the blank pages at the back of this packet. Do you feel close to God or far away? Does He seem like a real person, someone you could actually know? Do you know much of His Word? How much of your spiritual life have you been faking to others? Write down what you think it means to know God.

## 2. Say Hi to God

It may sound silly, but it's helpful to remember that our God is a person, not a system. He has a personality, likes and dislikes, joys and sorrows. Take a few minutes to talk with Him as you would a friend sitting next to you. Treat God the way you would like to be treated: be honest with Him, don't be in a hurry when you talk to Him, and leave space to listen.

If you feel comfortable, talk to Him out loud. Or write your words down in a journal, like you are writing a letter. Invite Him into your journey of knowing Him better. Ask Him to let you know Him!

## 3. What is Knowing God Like?

The following verses describe what it is like to know God. Look each one up and write down what you learn.

John 17:3

Psalms 89:15-16

Philippians 3:7-10

Psalms 100:3

Psalms 9:10

Galatians 4:8-9

Psalms 16:11

Isaiah 54:5

Psalms 25:14

Did you learn anything new about what it means to know God? What was your favorite verse? Why?

#### **4. How Can We Know God?**

Read Psalm 27:8, Jeremiah 29:13 and James 4:8. What do they all have in common?

Our primary commandment is to love God with all that we are (Mark 12:29-30), but it's hard to love someone you know nothing about. Our first step to intimacy with God, toward loving God, is getting to know Him. How do we do that? Through reading and studying the Bible.

Contrary to how many of us were raised, the Bible is not a self-help book, it is not primarily a book about who we are and what we should do. It is a book about God and what He has done.

Read Psalm 89:5-18 and make a list of everything you learn about who God is in these verses.

What was your favorite thing to learn about God? Was there anything you already knew but were reminded of?

#### **5. We Must Pray**

Read Jesus's words in John 5:39-40. What is the purpose of the scriptures? What is an improper use of the scriptures?

If we don't take what we learn about God to Him in prayer, then our reading is useless. God reveals Himself to us through the Bible so that we will draw near to Him in prayer.

Spend a few minutes talking to God about what you learned in Psalm 89. Thank Him for who He is. Ask Him questions about who He is. Ask Him to help you love Him for who He is, not who you have thought He is.

#### **6. Make a Plan**

If you aren't in a habit of regularly reading God's Word and talking to Him in prayer, make a plan today before you leave this spot. Nothing in life matters if we don't know God! For He sustains our lives and is our greatest good!

Pick a book of the Bible to start reading when you get home. If you don't know where to start, Genesis or John are great books to begin with. Now pick a time to meet with God. Then tell someone else who will ask you about your time.

As you read, keep a running list of all you are learning about God's character and pray to Him. Talk to him about those things.

Before you leave this moment, take 10 minutes to just be quiet. To do nothing. To just be. Let it be an offering to God, one that says "Because Jesus did all the work, I can just rest."

Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

Colossians 4:2



# Discouraged & Defeated

## 1. A Wilderness for the Beloved

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the **wilderness** to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

Matthew 4:1-2

One of the hardest seasons for the child of God is the wilderness. That dry and arid place where God seems absent, feelings numb and harden, faith seems to make little different, and the Bible tastes like hard, stale bread. Maybe you know what got you here, maybe you're clueless as to how this happened. Either way, you're looking for the quickest exit sign. Unfortunately, you won't leave until God lets you out.

But be encouraged: God only brings those He loves into the wilderness. In Exodus it was His newly freed people. In Hosea it was His soon to be exiled people. In Matthew it was His son. And so it will be for those whom He loves today.

This wilderness has a glorious purpose: to cultivate dependency on God. What may appear to be a death sentence will soon become a wedding, the beginning of a new intimate relationship with God.

Take a few minutes to be honest with God about this hard season you're in.

## 2. Read Hosea 2

Read slowly, underlining words that stand out to you. This passage is about Hosea's wife, but ultimately was a parable of God's people. There is a lot we can learn about the ways of God in this chapter.

Now read verses 3-13 and make a list of all the verbs you see.

What is God stripping you of in this season? If you can't think of anything, ask God to "search you and know your heart" (Psalm 139:23) and then wait a few minutes to see if He brings anything to mind.

Read verses 14-23. Make a list of all the verbs you see.

Which verb in this second half resonates the most with you? Why? What are you hoping God will do in your wilderness?

## 3. What is Your Greatest Need?

Read Mark 10:46-52.

Place yourself in this story. Bartimaeus had a problem. He was a blind beggar. But you aren't blind, so what is your greatest need in this season? What is the thing you need God to do for you that you cannot do for yourself? Write your answer in your journal.

But the Lord answered here, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but **one thing** is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion which will not be taken away from her.

Luke 10:41-42

And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and **was crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David;** my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon." But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, "Send her away, for she is crying out after us." He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." And he answered, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered her, "**O woman, great is your faith!** Be it done for you as you desire." And her daughter was healed instantly.

Matthew 15:22-28

Jesus called Bartimaeus to Himself and asked him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" If Jesus came to you, face to face, and asked you this question, what would you say? What **one thing** would you ask Him for?

Jesus said Bartimaeus's faith made him well (verse 52). What actions were associated with Bartimaeus's faith? What verbs are associated with him in this passage? What does this say about the nature of faith? Do you see this kind of faith in your life right now?

#### **4. Pour Out Your Heart**

Talk to God about why this season is so hard. Tell Him what you want Him to do for you.

Be specific.

Be brutally honest.

He already knows, nothing is a surprise to Him. This is not a calculated, measured pouring out. Imagine pouring out the contents of a pitcher of water on the ground.

Before you leave this moment, take 10 minutes to just be quiet. To do nothing. To just be. Let it be an offering to God, one that says "Because Jesus did all the work, I can just rest."