

# UNHURRIED TIME WITH GOD

Solitude & Silence



# Unhurried Time with God Guidelines

Unhurried time alone with God is a way of talking about the spiritual practices of solitude and silence. We call it solitude, but we are really alone *with God*. We say silence, but we are being quiet *with God*. This practice of regularly pulling back from our usual rhythms of life and work can breathe life into our souls and keep us refreshed for our long journey of life. No one can live on constant exhale.

This time alone with God is not for accomplishing a list of spiritual to-dos. It is more like a Sabbath day than a work day. Such a day is not measured by the ruler of productivity. It is a practice of disengagement, which is quite contrary to our usual modes of accomplishment, achievement or apparent productivity. Silence and solitude is measured by rest, creative expression, communion, relationship and restoration.

We often talk about the Christian life as a relationship with God. But a practical question to ask is, simply, “How do you cultivate that relationship? How do you grow in that relationship?” The answer, in part, is to set aside unhurried time to enjoy the presence of God. We make time to be alone and quiet with God to offer God the gift of our attention, and to listen and watch for God’s presence in whatever way God wants to be present with us.

Those who practice this discipline have shared with us that they have experienced:

- a deep sense of peace.
- an awareness of the care and creativity of God.
- a sense of God’s very personal involvement in their life.
- encouragement and energy for their relationships and their work.

At nearly every day retreat or weekend retreat we lead at Unhurried Living, we make time for silence and solitude. We hope you will join one of our retreats in this mentored process of making time and space to be with God.

Blessings,

*Alan & Gem Fadling*

# Unhurried Time with God Guidelines

**TIME & SPACE:** Schedule a window of at least two hours and up to six hours. Put this in your calendar like any other important personal or business meeting you might schedule. Don't move it unless there is an emergency. Choose a location you enjoy. It might be your own backyard, a local museum, a beach, a park, a forest, wherever you choose.

**WHAT TO BRING:** Resist the temptation to bring anything that feels like a "to do" task. Bring whatever is life-giving for you: Music, spiritual reading, your bible, a journal. Keep things simple. Less is usually better. Depending on your location, you may want to bring a chair, a blanket, and something to eat and drink. Dress appropriately (in layers) in view of your weather.

**ARRIVE & SETUP:** Let your time begin on the drive to your chosen location. Listen to worship music or just enjoy the silence in the car. Talk to God about your hopes, your anxiety, your desires, whatever. When you arrive, don't spend too much time looking for the perfect spot. You could spend your entire time that way. Simply choose a "good enough" spot and sit yourself down. Or, if you are walking, begin your stroll at a leisurely pace. Sitting still the whole time is not a requirement. If moving helps, then move.

**IDENTIFY & RELEASE:** This is a time to be with the Lord in whatever way He knows that you need. Therefore, begin your time by noticing your expectations and agendas. Release these to God and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Lord may wish to bring you refreshment, challenge, encouragement, conviction, joy, grieving, play, etc. He may wish to just be together with no apparent agenda. Trust him in this.

**SILENCE:** After releasing your agendas, it helps to take the first 15-20 minutes to be completely silent. Let the dust settle in your mind. Don't worry if your mind is noisy. Just do what you can to resist the temptation to "do something" or "say something." Enjoy the silence as much as you can.

**LISTENING:** Listen with your whole self: your ears, your eyes, all of your senses. Pay attention. If you are outdoors, look at insects, flowers, birds, trees, water. Let God speak to you through creation. Listen for whatever God might be saying to you. If you are indoors, notice your surroundings. Move slowly and breathe deeply. If God seems to have nothing to say, remember it is good just to be in His presence without communication. Again, if you are an active personality, you may find that walking or hiking helps you to pay attention to God.

**WHAT DO I DO?:** At first, it may seem strange to have no agenda, but over time, it will become comfortable and actually a wonderfully anticipated part of your time with God. You may have brought some items (listed in WHAT TO BRING). It is perfectly ok to spend some time with these. Go ahead and listen to music. Close your eyes and let the sounds enter your heart. Read a few pages of your book. Not for learning, but for opening yourself to transformation. You may walk and pray. You may be silent the entire time. The point is that whatever you do, to remember you are *with* God. This time is not measured by productivity but by relationship.

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**OUTWARD DISTRACTIONS:** Do what you can to avoid obvious outward distraction. Seek to find a solitary and quiet location. Turn your mobile phone off or put it in airplane mode. Don't look at your calendar or "to do" list. Seek to offer God the gift of your attention and just focus on what He might wish to say or do.

**INWARD DISTRACTIONS:** The problem of distractions is unavoidable. You will find your mind wandering or racing to many things other than God. You don't have control over this, but you can decide whether or not you will *distract yourself* with these distracting thoughts. Here are two simple strategies to consider: 1) Keep a blank piece of paper nearby. Write the distractions as they come. Let them go. They can wait until later. 2) Picture a slow flowing river in your mind. Notice leaves that float atop the water. Each leaf is a thought that comes to mind. Watch as they gently float by. No need to engage. Simply notice and let go.

**SLEEP:** If you become drowsy, let God give you a nap. You could think of yourself as a beloved child falling asleep on a parent's lap. God the Father loves to give us the gift of rest. Often, people wake up from their nap refreshed and able to be much more aware and attentive to God's voice.

*"Only solitude and silence, extensively practiced at wisely allotted intervals, can take the world off my back and forever release me from both hurry and loneliness. They open the door to productive engagement with other disciplines. I begin to find myself increasingly before God in such a way that he can safely fill me with himself."*  
(Dallas Willard, *Christian Herald*, 2001).

**Everything becomes prayer when you bring it into the presence of God.**