**No Variance Week 2: Solitude, Slowing, & Smallness**

**Message Notes**

### The ancient Christian practices of “spiritual disciplines” help us:

#### Stay grounded during periods of fear and uncertainty

#### Access God’s grace

#### Grow in the spiritual life

#### Experience positive personal transformation

### The first spiritual discipline is PRAYER

#### *“Pray without ceasing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

### The second spiritual discipline has three parts:

#### Simplicity

#### Slowness

#### Smallness

### Jesus uses a CHILD as an object lesson to teach his disciples about this way of living (Mark 9:36).

### Simplicity asks us to LET GO of our WANTS and DESIRES.

#### *“Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every foul practice”* (James 3:16)

### Slowing down asks us to UNPLUG, SLOW DOWN, and spend time in SOLITUDE:

#### “*But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you*” (Matthew 6:6).

#### “*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed*” (Mark 1:35).

### Smallness asks us to unplug from an obsession with OURSELVES.

#### “*If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all*” (Mark 9:35).

### **ACTION PLAN:** Pick one spiritual exercise to help you practice simplicity, slowness, or smallness. Here are some ideas[[1]](#footnote-1):

## Simplicity

#### Practice speaking simply. No double meanings or half-truths.

#### Clean out the basement, garage, closet, or attic and give some of your things to charity.

#### Intentionally limit your choices (*e.g.,* cereal, TV channels, entertainment)

#### If someone admires something of yours, give it away.

#### If you can get where you need to go by walking or public transportation, try it.

#### Make a catalog of all the gadgets you have in your home. Decide which you could get rid of and not really miss.

#### Eat more simply. Intentionally limit meat or rich foods to a few times a week. Cut down on alcohol.

## Slowness

#### Before you begin a meeting, allow a moment of silence (or better yet a prayer).

#### Before your head leaves the pillow in the morning, stop and offer God three central concerns of your day.

#### Enter into prayer in a leisurely way.

#### Intentionally drive in the slow lane, get in the longer line, or wait for other people to leave an area before you do.

#### Insert margins of rest and relaxation in your day (shorter appointments, breaks in between).

#### Read slowly for transformation rather than just information.

## Smallness

#### Carry out a random act of kindness or some ordinary service for someone. Help a colleague with a project at work. Do an extra chore at home. Pay for someone’s meal.

#### Be available to people and try not to get irritated when you are interrupted. Keep your office door open when you can.

#### Hold your tongue. The “ministry of a closed mouth” is a victory for the kingdom. It is not necessary to voice your opinion (or even have one) about every single thing.

#### Take small insults without fighting back. Try to hear God speak through the caustic words of difficult people.

1. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (IVP Books, 2005); John Ortberg, *The Life You’ve Always Wanted: Spiritual Disciplines for Ordinary People* (Zondervan, 2002)*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)