

Why Do We Need to Get Alone with God and Rest?

Devotional #12, Mark 6:30-56

³⁰ The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. ³¹ And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. ³² And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. ³³ Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. ³⁶ Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." ³⁷ But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" ³⁸ And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." ³⁹ Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. ⁴¹ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² And they all ate and were satisfied. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. ⁴⁴ And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

⁴⁵ Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷ And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. ⁴⁸ And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, ⁵⁰ for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." ⁵¹ And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, ⁵² for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

⁵³ When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. ⁵⁴ And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him ⁵⁵ and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

- Mark 6:30-56, ESV

Twice in today's passage, we see the importance of withdrawing from public ministry for time alone with God. First, the disciples were called away to spend some time with Jesus and then, later, Jesus sent the disciples away and withdrew by Himself to pray. What was the benefit of these times and what do they tell us about our needs?

First, Jesus called the disciples to "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." This was immediately after they had returned from being sent out by Jesus to preach the Gospel of the kingdom and cast out demons. This first ministry experience had them feeling excited and it also brought them increased popularity. So many people were coming and going to see Jesus and His

disciples that they could not even eat a meal in peace.

Here we see several reasons for getting alone with God to rest:

1. When we need time to process and pray about what God has been doing in our lives.
2. When we need some peace and quiet so we can think, reflect and be refreshed.
3. When we need to get away from the voices and the crowds, the busyness and even the acclaim of others, so we can hear what Jesus would say to us through His word.

Second, after the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus Himself "*went up on the mountain to pray.*" This is one of many times when we see Jesus seeking to get away from other people so He could spend time alone with His Father. Jesus wanted to do His Father's will and to please His Father in everything. Jesus enjoyed warm and close fellowship with His Father through the Holy Spirit. He often spent time alone with God the Father.

From Jesus' example, we can learn a few things. If even Jesus Himself needed regular time alone with His Father, then we can know:

1. We are never too mature or too seasoned in the Christian life that we no longer need regular time alone with the Lord.
2. We are never too busy, too in-demand or too devoted to ministering to the needs of others to justify neglecting time alone with the Lord.
3. We need wisdom and grace, which come from intimate fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

Martin Luther was a man used greatly by God to accomplish much good, often in spite of his own personal failings. One of the keys to Luther's effectiveness in ministry was time spent in prayer. He was known to say, "I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Luther was once asked by his barber for advice on how to pray and he wrote a short guide to prayer in response, a book available in English as *A Simple Way to Pray* by Martin Luther.

May the Lord give us the grace to be mindful of our need for time alone with Him. May we never be too busy or be fooled into being too self-sufficient to make time alone with the Lord a regular priority.