



## **ENTER** God's presence

He says, **“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”**  
**The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.**  
 Psalm 46:10-11

Heavenly Father, great is your faithfulness. All that we need you have provided through the life, death and resurrection of your son Jesus. Help us lay aside the things of life that would distract us from hearing you speak to us as we gather around your word right now. Amen.



## **SHARE** life together

1. **Share your highs and lows with each other?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **When do you feel most lonely?**
4. **Have you experienced a time when you felt particularly close to God? What was happening at the time?**

Experts say we live in an Attention Economy and our wealth or net worth is measured in clicks, likes, page-views, downloads, swipes followers & friends. Every second of our life, something is craving for our attention - notifications, spam, RSS feeds, social network requests, sponsored posts, reminders or news bulletins. Distraction has become habitual. Checking your phone while waiting in line is our default. Stopping mid-sentence while reacting to vibrations real or imagined is common place. These distractions push us further away from the abundance of life God desires for us to receive. We spectate rather than create. Live on the side-lines instead of get in the game. But God calls us to keep our attention focused on Jesus. He invites us to listen to his voice so that no matter where we are, who we're with, or what is happening we respond to him alone as he lives through us to bless and transform our world. Distractions may never go away but in their midst we can offer a broken hurting community looking for "the next thing," the transfigured, transforming, risen Jesus. He alone stills the disturbances of our lives, and calms the clamourings of our hearts. He invites us to share his glory by fixing our attention & devotion on his life given for us. This week as we explore less distraction...more focus,

Week beginning:  
**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Worship series:  
**Addition via Subtraction:  
 Deliberate Discipleship**



## **VERSE** for the week

Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

**Mark 9:8**



## **REMEMBER** this week

Because transfiguration is the centre where Jesus is all there is, at the point where Jesus is all there is, our lives are transformed too.



**LISTEN** attentively

Read Mark 9:2-10

5. **What key words/thoughts/ideas/questions arise for you as you hear this text?**
6. **What do you hear this scripture saying to you right now?**
7. **What do you think your response would have been if you had been invited up the mountain with Peter, James and John on that day?**

Solitude. For some (the introverts among us) it is a blissful paradise full of opportunity to reflect, think, and wonder about all sorts of crazy things. For others (the extroverted ones) it can be like a personal torture session that feels like it drags on for eternity. Love it or hate it though, it has some significant importance within the life of a Christian. As we have already seen throughout this series of LifeGroup studies, Jesus often took himself and his disciples off to quiet place for a time of solitude and rest.

8. **How do you feel about the prospect of time spent in quiet and solitude? Does it excite you or do you dread the idea? Why?**

In this story, Jesus has taken three of his closest friends up a mountain to witness something spectacular. Throughout the Bible many people are reported to have had close encounters with God on the top of mountains, including the two who suddenly appear in this story and have a conversation with Jesus. Moses encountered God on Mount Sinai as he was given the Ten Commandments (Exodus 19:20-20:21), Elijah encountered God in the still small voice while hiding on Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:1-14). This is one of the reasons we sometimes speak of having mountain top experiences. However, perhaps more significant than being on a mountain, is the idea of moving above or beyond the busyness, concerns, and distractions of life below. If you have ever actually walked a mountain trail or found yourself at the top of a high vantage point looking out over the things below you, you will know the different perspective that comes as you distance yourself from life below. Unfortunately our cluttered and distracted lives often obscure our vision of Jesus. By creating quiet times of solitude we give ourselves the chance to shift our perspective, leave behind the clutter and distraction and again bring our focus back to the one thing that matters, Jesus Christ.

9. **What things in your life might be distracting you from your relationship with Jesus at the moment?**
10. **Mountain tops are great, but we don't all have mountain tops in our backyards! Where are some other places you have found helpful when seeking a time of solitude with Jesus?**

One of the other challenges for us when it comes to solitude is simply the idea of 'being'. Jesus' disciple Peter, was a 'do-er'. He was the one who jumped out of the boat to walk on the water with Jesus and after a few steps quickly began to sink below the waves. He was the one who took action and lopped off the ear of the high priest's servant when they came to arrest Jesus, then going on to deny knowing Jesus three times before morning. Peter always had to be doing something. So here he is, on a mountain top in the presence of a glorified Jesus and two of the Hebrew scriptures biggest heroes and even then he can't just sit still and be in awe. Mark's account of this tells us that the disciples were so afraid they did not know what to say but Peter goes ahead and says something anyway, offering to build a small shrine to commemorate the event. There is nothing shameful about being unsure what to say in the presence of God. It is perfectly good, and often sensible, to just be still and know that he is God.

11. **How difficult do you find it to just be idle? How can being idle in the presence of God be a productive use of time?**



**GROW** deeper

Part of Peter's response came from a desire to make this moment last. Throughout the Old Testament we hear stories of the Israelites and their forefathers marking the site of significant events with stones and altars. Being such a significant event, it stands to reason that this might be the immediate response of a Jewish fisherman.

However, as the story continues a cloud descends over the scene and the disciples hear the voice from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" These words which had been spoken over Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan River are now re-affirmed here in the hearing of these three men. What they realise again (and perhaps what they had lost sight of) was that before them stood Jesus – the Son of God. Yet this revelation did them no good stuck on a mountain top. Try as they might to preserve the memory of the moment by building shrines and shelters as if in some vain attempt to preserve that one moment in time, Jesus leads them back down the mountain with instructions to keep what they have seen to themselves until after "the Son of Man has risen from the dead. In this encounter the three disciples got a glimpse of the fulness of who Jesus is, but they could not yet conceive of what he had come to do. The disciples needed to have that moment with Jesus so they could make sense of his resurrection when the time came. This is the point of having quiet time with Jesus; simply to sit in his presence and deepen our understanding of who he really is and contemplate the significance of all that he has done so that our lives (back at the bottom of the mountain) might be transformed.

- 12. Have you ever had a 'mountain top' experience with God? How difficult was it for you to 'come back down to earth' after it?**
- 13. Think back over your mountain top experiences, how did they help prepare/equip/sustain you for life back on the ground?**



## **LIVE** purposefully

Life on the ground can get rough. Even Jesus needed to take time away from it to consciously rest in the presence of the Heavenly Father. Without taking time to reconnect with the reality and deep truth of who Jesus is and all that he has done to save us, the world begins to create an unrealistic or distorted version of Jesus for us. Perhaps for you, Jesus has become someone who loves others but couldn't possibly love or forgive you? Maybe you have an image of a Jesus who is watching you closely, waiting to point out and judge you for every little mistake that you make? Maybe your Jesus died on the cross for you and now doesn't care what you do or how you live? All of these are not the real Jesus. Time alone with him, in his presence, without the distracting noise of the world all around you will help you to see more clearly who he really is and all that he has done for you.

- 14. Do you have friends who might have a distorted picture of Jesus? How might you help them see him more clearly?**
- 15. What are some of your blind spots when it comes to the real Jesus? How are you going to take time out with him to correct them?**
- 16. Try having time out with God at different times and in different places this week. Be prepared to share some of your new 'mountain tops' with the group next time.**



## **PRAY** intentionally

- Praise God for his faithfulness and relentless love.
- Thank Jesus for his life among us and example to us.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you be still and to know more deeply all that God has done for you.



## **BLESS** one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], may the glory of Christ be reflected more and more in your life. Amen.**