

LONELINESS VS. SOLITUDE

I think it was Paul Tillich who said, "Language has created the word loneliness to express the pain of being alone – and the word solitude to express the glory of being alone with God."

Here is how one Christian turns loneliness into solitude.

Each morning let the first words you say be, "Jesus is with me. I claim His presence." In the middle of the morning, stop wherever you are and whatever you are doing, close your eyes for a moment and say, "Jesus is with me. I claim His presence." At noon repeat it and sometime during the afternoon when your energies are depleted, and repeat it again. Finally, the last thing you do before falling asleep, look up at the darkness and say, "Jesus is with me. I claim His presence." Practice the presence of God by placing yourself deliberately before God every day in your prayers, by praying a presence prayer many times during the day, by wakefulness and inner attention to each word you pray, and by shutting the doors of the senses to be alone with God for a few minutes each day. For it is by practicing the presence that the presence becomes real. A successful businessman shared his secret for preventing tensions. He needed to be renewed at least twice a day, he said, so he had a short period of meditation at 10 o'clock and 3 o'clock. This did not take the usual form of prayer for he did not think about his problems but dwelt upon God's power and peace. He placed himself deliberately in God's presence: he thought of the spiritual strength of Christ flowing into him. He reported that those few minutes a day spent practicing God's presence resulted in complete renewal of energy and clarity of mind. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee because he trusteth in Thee" (Isaiah 26:3). "Close your cell door to your body, the door of your lips to words, the interior door to spirits. Hesychia is worship and uninterrupted service to God." (St. John Climacus) Like a person in a telephone booth with the door open, we are bombarded daily by the many conflicting voices of the crowd. What we need is to close the door on the crowd daily and listen to the voice of God, who is trying so hard to speak to us.¹

¹ Anthony M. Coniaris, Discovering God