The Siren’s Call
Week 1: Isolation from Yourself and God
Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Luke 5:16
Dr. Matt Cassidy --- September 22, 2019

Great stories --- fifty years of life change. We’ll have some more testimonies each week, representing each of the decades of men and women that have been attending here --- with songs from that decade.

Anyway, let me begin our learning time with a word of prayer and then we’ll get started.

Lord Jesus, we do lift up this time to You, that we might learn how we could effectively apply the transcendent nature of Your word, Your Spirit in our lives, in this culture at this time. Lord, I’d ask that You would just help us see things for what they are, that we might live cautiously but boldly at the same time. I’d ask that Your Spirit would make His strength powerful in these next few minutes. We pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

So in the next two or three weeks I’m going to be teaching on a subject from this class that I took last summer at Regent College. Regent College is a seminary in Vancouver, British Columbia. I’ve been going there for about fifteen years about every two years or so. I take a graduate class there for a few reasons. One, they have an award-winning summer school program. They fly in faculty from all over the world. It’s become a thing.

Also, when I started looking into this fifteen years ago, it was the only graduate school in the Western hemisphere where I could go and audit a class. I don’t write papers anymore. I’m done with that. And so, they let me audit the class. And then the third reason is it’s in Vancouver in the summer time, so, yeah, I’m going there.

I’ve had a lot of classes. This one I took this summer was called “Rebuilding Family and Household: Family and Church in the Technology Age.” So when I came back and kind of did a report for some of the people in leadership here, they mentioned --- “You know what? You need to come and teach that.” And I said, “It’s kind of a Sunday school thing.” And they said, “Why don’t you teach from the pulpit, too?” So I’m going to spend two weeks on some very practical
how-to’s for living in the age of technology. And then on the last week on October 6, I’ll be teaching a Sunday school class for parents, and it will be focusing on how to parent in the age of technology. And so New Parents and Young Families and Parenting Teens, I’m going to meet at the same hour you normally meet, but we’re going to meet in the auditorium, not in your classroom. And we would love for you guys, if you’re looking to try out a Sunday school, one of these parenting classes, this would be a good time to come. Bring your friends --- it will be fun.

So the class that I took was taught by a gentleman named Andy Crouch. I’ve been following him for almost twenty-five years. He is an exceptionally intelligent cultural thinker and his résumé is pages long. He’s married to a research physicist. She’s smart, too. They’re smart people, they talk smart things all the time. I don’t know what’s it’s like at their house --- I can’t imagine. At my house it goes like this: “Melinda, honey, you forgot to feed the cats again.” She says, “Matt, sweetie, we don’t have a cat.” So I’m not going to bring my family conversation into this teaching time. I’m going to bring their family conversation into this. There were ten lectures, a chapel service, we read a considerable number of periodicals and books and other media.

The class was based on this first book that I’m going to show you by Albert Borgmann. It’s called *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophy of Inquiry*. 
English is his second language --- he’s German --- this is a really hard book to read. Don’t buy this book, because it’s entitled *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life: A Philosophy of Inquiry*. Why would you buy that?

Anyway, a lot that we’re going to learn is from that book. It was prophetic, particularly when it was written.

Another couple of books that you might be familiar with are from a rather famous author --- Sherry Turkle. She has been teaching at MIT for decades now and she was almost invented the sociological impact of technology on the family. And when her original TED talk years ago was released, she made the cover of *Wired* magazine because she was so optimistic and full of hope for all the things possible in the family and relationships because of technology. Her last TED talk --- not so much. She was more like --- “Oh, no, it’s destroying human experience.” So she has a lot to say about that.

And finally, *The Soul of Shame* was a book that we used. I’m going to bring that up next week and particularly in the parenting session.

Andy’s book that was used as a textbook is a very practical book. I ordered a couple of hundred copies of it. We’ll be able to sell those when they get in. This is a very hands-on, here’s
how he raised his children in the context of technology. He had ten commitments and how he expressed them. Very practical. Those will be for sale soon.

Now the series for two weeks and then the Sunday school class is called “The Siren’s Call” --- navigating in this new normal. And the reason it’s called that is based on Homer’s famous writing --- he’s a famous legendary author of Greek myth. And it’s the story of Odysseus’ story of his return home from the battle of the Trojan War. He’s working his way back and he must pass by the shore where the Sirens are calling. The Sirens are monsters, but they’re disguised as beautiful women. And the power of these Sirens is in their voices. They have a mesmerizing song. And they lead the sailors to the shores where it turns out they are not beautiful women --- well, here’s their song: they sing, “Come and let us entertain you. Let us entice you with our melodies.” And what they mean to say is, “Why don’t you come closer so we can kill you and then eat you.” That’s what the Sirens did.

Well, Odysseus has to go by these Sirens, so he finds out through a goddess’s advice how to maneuver through this. And so he decides from her advice that he would fill the ears of his crew with wax. He gets beeswax from her and plugs their ears so that they won’t hear the songs of the Sirens. But he wants to hear them. No one’s heard their songs and lived. So he is tied to the mast of the ship and tells his men, “No matter what I say, you need to keep me tied up,
because I want to hear this song.” And the song --- oh, it’s enticing. “Odysseus, the bravest of all heroes --- Odysseus, come, and we will teach you wisdom. The songs we sing will bring you peace.” Yeah. Their enticement was not in their beauty; it was in their promise of flattery and peace and wisdom.

Now because his ears were not plugged and he could hear the Sirens’ song, he saw the Sirens as these beautiful women – it says with the beauty of Helen of Troy herself. And as he heard the songs he tried to break free. And his men got up and they tied him to the post even tighter still. They, unable to hear the music and the lyrics, saw the Sirens for what they were. There were winged monsters with crooked claws, eager to eat them. Wow, yeah. That’s some story.

The reason we’re calling this series “The Sirens’ Call” is because, when we talk about technology --- let me just describe that word for a moment. Technology is not the Internet and it’s not social media. It is way more than that, especially with Borgmann’s interpretation of things. We’ll talk about a lot more of that next week. It’s “easy everything” --- “easy everywhere” --- is technology. So, it’s even the automatic dishwasher that you have. I’m not against automatic dishwashers. We’ll talk about that next week.

But the idea is the sirens of wanting life to be easy everywhere has a consequence for us. And we need the technology, just like he needed to get past these Sirens. Odysseus had to get past that, but he had to learn how to get past. He lived --- he sailed – cautiously, with an inside understanding about what he was going up against. And so, he had a healthy fear, just like we should have a healthy fear of technology. So, listen: he chose ahead of time because he knew later he couldn’t be trusted with choice. When he was sober, he made a decision, because later he knew he wouldn’t be able to.

So, when we look at technology, hopefully, I’ll be able to give you some insight as to what it means and how it affects our minds and our humanness. But technology is a very good servant, and it is a vicious master. And so, we must learn to live wisely in an age of technology, because technology will bewitch you like the songs bewitched Odysseus and he couldn’t even see them for what they were. Technology can do that as well.
The Distraction of Projected Light

Let me give you a couple of reasons. This is interesting. Human vision was designed and has always been, for hundreds of thousands of years, able to see reflective light, not the source of light, but just the reflection of light. Transmitted light for hundreds of thousands of years has been the sun, a flame, and a firefly. That’s it. So even the night light in the sky we have, the moon --- it’s not a light; it’s reflected light. And so, our brain and our minds that are hooked up to our eyeballs are made to see that. Now with the Industrial Revolution and with electrical lighting and now with laptops and phones --- now we have projected light coming at us all the time. And our eyes and our brains go to that. Our vision is drawn to that, and we can’t help but be drawn to it. Some of you in the audience right now --- it would be appropriate to look at me. But it’s easier to look at that screen. We actually designed --- this is the one thing I got with this auditorium --- I wanted to make sure that I couldn’t see these screens from standing at this place. I don’t want to see anything like that.

Here’s another, better example. If you’re in a classroom or you’re in church and someone three rows up from you turns on their phone and then that screen lights up --- oh, yeah, you’re going to be drawn to that little screen three rows up instead of what you’re supposed to be looking at. All the studies have shown in classrooms when somebody has a laptop open and they’re multitasking, everyone behind them is multitasking with them. And that’s why Alamo Drafthouse will have you thrown in jail if you open your phone during one of those movies. God bless Alamo Drafthouse! Anyway, I digress here …

The Addictive Nature of Screens

The second thing --- not just the physiology of screens, but the addictive nature of them. They are designed --- by design --- websites and the information that’s available on the Internet is designed to be addictive. To boys, particularly, to girls, especially. To men --- you bet, and to women --- uh-huh, you bet.

Just two years ago, my life changed because I just got careless. Two years ago in October I had to take off and I had big plans for stuff to do around the house and when I got back to work after a week of vacation --- about ten days of vacation – when I returned to work, I was not refreshed, I was not restored. I was exhausted and distracted. And I thought, *What happened to*
me? I had time off. So, I looked back and I realized that I had dropped basic disciplines that I have in my regular life. And because of the weather, I missed out on what I was planning to do. In October two years ago, I was going to paint the outside of the house and do a bunch of fence work. But it rained the whole ten days. And I didn’t have plan B. So, every morning I’d wake up and I’d open my laptop and just bounce around stuff. I didn’t go to any bad websites --- don’t get me wrong. But I did go to every single website on the Internet. I mean I was just dink, dink, dink, dink, dink. And when I was done with vacation, I was done. I mean, I was cooked. I was Siren food. I had the attention span of a carrot. And it wasn’t until I got back to work that I thought, *What has happened to me?* And I realized that everything that I had ever read about the addictive nature and neuroplasticity and its effect on my brain, it happened to me in that one week. And I promise you, it took months to recover from it. Because what you practice, you become. And what you eat, you crave. And I ate junk food for the brain and I was a sloppy soul.

Technology has the power to adversely affect our humanness. Technology has the power to adversely affect our humanness. You don’t have to appeal to Christian writers for this. People with great insight --- again, Sherry Turkle, the MIT professor --- her PhD is in social studies of science and technology. She’s been at the forefront of this all along. Hundreds of studies, thousands of people interviewed --- here’s a quick paragraph from *Scientific America*. Listen to how she’s appealing to this loss of humanness and why:

> “I do some of my field work at stop signs, at checkout lines at supermarkets. Give people even a second, and they’re doing something with their phone. Every bit of research says people’s capacity to be alone is disappearing. What can happen is that you lose that moment to have a daydream, or to cast an eye inward. And instead, you look to the outside.

> Solitude is the precondition of having a conversation with yourself. This capacity to be with yourself and discover yourself is the bedrock for human development. But now, from the youngest age --- even two, or three, or four --- children are given technology that removes the solitude by giving them something externally distracting.”

Dr. Turkle is saying that we have to be alone – have solitude --- to experience the fullness of human development. And that’s being taken away from us. She’s very concerned with this.
Let me tell you --- this is the answer to the Sirens’ call. This is wax in the ears. This is “tie me to the mast so that I can survive in this new normal of technology.” These three things: solitude, quiet, silence.

We have to plan ahead. We have to make choices before we make choices so that we can live.

**Solitude, Quiet, Silence**

These three things --- solitude, quiet, silence --- they are good for the human soul, good all by themselves, in any human context in any age. They are also the only way to survive the Sirens’ call of technology today. Henri Nouwen said that is impossible for a person to have a spiritual life without solitude. It’s that simple.

Turkle says in her book *Along Together* that the difficulty we’re having with solitude now is that we fear loneliness. And loneliness is failed solitude. Loneliness, by the way, is a thing we have to break through in solitude, to enjoy. There’s something on the other side of the loneliness. And her biggest concern, and other scholars’ biggest concerns with the lack of solitude, is that solitude is the place where we learn empathy, especially when we’re very young children --- and that’s being taken away from young children.

But listen --- empathy is your ability to be able to hear another person’s soul and experience – to know someone. To know someone deeply --- that’s an empathy skill. Oddly, empathy happens when you are alone learning about yourself. It is in this self-reflection, in that daydreaming about who you are, that gives you the foundation to be able to turn outward to other people. And so, Turkle’s fear is based on this ironic cycle of death that takes place in modern media, particularly in the social part of technology. In that moment in the doctor’s room when you’re waiting and --- *Okay, here’s this quiet moment.* Uh-oh --- this could be a time when you are enjoying that moment and have a self-reflective time. But no, we go on and check some kind of social media so we can stay connected. But we can’t connect because we didn’t have solitude. In other words, you have to have solitude to be with other people. But we don’t have solitude because we’re trying so hard to stay connected to other people. There’s power in solitude.

And the Bible has been saying this for two millenniums. For thirty years developmental psychologists have been saying solitude is required. And now neuroscience is proving it even in the laboratory. There’s power here. You must have time alone.
Jean Paul Sartre said, “If you are lonely when you are lonely, you are in bad company.”

Paul Tillich says that solitude is the glory of being alone; loneliness is the pain of being alone.

And we fear that pain. But we have to transcend that. You have to break through the loneliness. Loneliness --- particularly when we’re young children --- this is why it’s important in developmental season --- loneliness is this desire for intimacy. And a child needs to learn to be alone so that the child can learn at an early age that the loneliness is okay and it needs to be embraced so they can learn who they are. They can connect with themselves. Some of the best conversations you’ll ever have in your life are with yourself. And if you deprive yourself of that opportunity, then you can’t have conversations with others.

And so, what’s lost sometimes in our upbringing is that maybe you weren’t taught how to be alone without being lonely. And now you have to learn how to be alone without being lonely, and alone without being bored. We fear boredom.

And it is in this loneliness, and sometimes the boredom --- F. B. Meyer says that Jesus shows up to show Himself for who He is. There’s something on the other side of loneliness. When you’re alone, it’s glory.

Lazarus 5:16

**But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.**

And that’s why all the Bible characters that are heroes --- look at the men and women in the Bible --- they all have extended periods of time in solitude --- set apart. In silence, in quiet, where they can experience the fullness of who God is. So whether it’s Abraham, or Moses in the desert with the sheep, or David on the run for Saul, Elijah when he’s the sole prophet, John the Baptist, Paul. Jesus the Christ, in His humanness, must experience solitude. “But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” so that He could be filled; so that He might hear the Lord. He would hear the Father’s voice in those places of loneliness --- in places of solitude, excuse me. (It says “lonely” in the passage, right?)
So, here’s the thing. Here’s what we’re going to do. Again, the last few weeks we’ve been in some really heavy, thick stuff. These next two weeks it’s going to be very application-driven. Here’s what we’re going to do: thirty-day challenge. It’s like a free membership – you know how you get a month free at some gyms? Here it is: Grace Covenant Church, let’s get in shape. Thirty-day challenge, a new practice to become a new person. Between now and the fiftieth anniversary, which is October 20 – it starts then in about thirty days --- let’s see what happens. Three disciplines --- we’re going to do these three disciplines. We’ll learn three this week --- another couple next week are really fun ones --- kind of weird, but they’re fun. These disciplines can help change our lives. You change what you do, you become a different person. What you do, you become. What you practice, you become.

Now disciplines --- don’t be afraid of that. That’s a spiritual word, disciplines of the faith. It’s like working out. That’s why I’m calling it like a gym membership – it’s like working out. And the point of lifting weights, for example, is to get to a place of overload. You get to that place where you can’t lift it anymore --- awesome, whether it’s one pound or two hundred pounds, you get to that place and then you grow strong by getting to that place of overload, that place where you can’t go farther. That’s the only way a muscle grows. That’s how it works. You don’t lift weights so you can lift weights. It’s a means, not an end. You lift weights so that you can have a healthy body that you can carry around in all the important stuff of life.

So, the disciplines of the faith are like working out the soul --- not a muscle, but you bring it to a place of progressive overload, a place where you’re bumping into that place where you’re uncomfortable --- solitude, quiet, silence --- and then you grow. It’s the only way there is to grow.

And by the way, solitude and quiet and silence --- these disciplines have been around for- - I was going to say two thousand years, but more like four thousand years. They’ve always been part of the disciplines of the faith of the saints. And like all of the disciplines, they’re purposeful in strengthening our hearts and souls. Fasting is a great example. Fasting is when you decide --- you choose ahead of time – to do something, because later on you don’t want to trust yourself with choice. And fasting is a great example of saying, when your mind, the metaphysical, the nonphysical part of your essence, of who you are, your soul, your mind; says to your anatomy,
your stomach, *Shut up with all your growling. You’re not the boss of me.* That’s what fasting does, the discipline of, physically and then spiritually, other things. It says, *Man, this is a great time to pray.* Or, *I can relate to the Lord in the context of fasting.* Fasting is when you choose ahead of time not to choose later. Fasting is when you say, *Tie me to the mast. Put wax in my ears. I’m going through some really bad singing here going on.* It’s facing the fears.

Solitude, quiet, silence --- these disciplines are facing the fear of loneliness and busyness, or boredom. And each time we do it we get a little bit better, a little bit stronger. Listen to this. The most powerful choices that you make are not often the big choices. The most powerful choices you make are when you choose to change your patterns; when you choose to change what you practice. What you practice, you become. What you eat, you crave. And if you could choose – if you could join us for thirty days --- the church, Grace, together we can choose to change our practice so that we change who we become.

Because this is critical, especially in technology. Because technology is designed to distract us. It is designed to keep us thinking about what’s right now, never stopping and thinking. Technology does that.

And, if that weren’t bad enough, it is fueled by --- part of the lostness of our bent soul is to stay distracted. Before there was technology, Blaise Pascal in the 1600’s wrote in his memoirs his thoughts. He’s one of the smartest men that has ever lived in the West. And he wrote this major section on his thoughts. It’s called “Distractions.” He noticed, watching people, that they stayed busy, they stayed distracted, because they were so fearful of a deep thought about the frailty of their own lives.

So, we have something bent inside of our souls saying, Stay distracted. And now we have technology that’s designed to keep us distracted. The power of these Sirens, friends, the power of the Sirens’ call --- we have to choose before it happens or it will be too late. We have to choose now, choose to be disciplined in these three areas.

**Solitude. ****Solitude is the ability to be alone without being lonely. It is the ability to be alone without being bored.** Bonhoeffer wrote this: “Let him who cannot be alone beware of community … Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.”

There are people who are addicted to being with other people. You should be afraid of that addiction. There are people that don’t like other people and want to be left alone. You should be afraid of that loneliness. That’s what Bonhoeffer is saying here.
The point is solitude --- it means to slow down. It means having the most crucial conversation you could have is probably with you. It is going through the boredom, getting to the beauty part. And for some it is exceptionally hard. I understand that. Look, especially if you have young children, they don’t want you be alone.

This is based on a true story. There are three children --- you have to look carefully --- look at the toddler on the ground. What’s going on, Mom? And then meanwhile, me in the living room enjoying a book all by myself. That’s how life is when you have little ones. My point is to make solitude a priority. Start small but go big. Your soul longs for this.

Victor Frankl --- you probably know the name – he wrote *Man’s Search for Meaning*. He was in the Nazi ghettos and then ultimately Auschwitz, the death camps, for a total of four years. And because of the way they packed people together, the context in those circumstances, he was forced to be with people all the time. And he said, “I craved solitude. I just wanted to be alone with my thoughts.” And here’s the extreme that he went to in order to achieve that. He knew that his soul needed that. There was a tent behind the hospital where he worked --- he served in the hospital there. And the tent behind it was where they stacked the most recent corpses. And you
would be left alone if you went back there. And so, he arranged so that he could be in charge of that. He would just go back into that tent where all the corpses were and open up the back of it so he could see the rolling hills of Bavaria and the green of the plant life and the flowers, and the mountain range, and he would just find himself lost in that moment of solitude. It was only the sound of the soldiers’ boots that would snap him out of that. That’s how important it was to him -- right? … to hang out with dead people in order to be alone. You need to do whatever you need to do to be alone.

When I had kids when they were young --- actually, when they were teenagers, too --- two words and I could have all the time I wanted to myself. Two words --- yard work. *Who wants to come out back and do some yard work?* What? Melinda figured it out, too. It’s amazing how slow you can plant a flower if you work on it. They’ll leave you alone, they will. They’ll stay away.

**Psalm 46:10**

Be still and know that I am God.

**Psalm 130:5**

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope.

If you’re married and you have children, you work as a team. The best gift you could ever give your mate is solitude. They need to have a conversation with themselves, with God. Be still … Be still and know that I am your God. You’ve got to stop. You’ve got to just be there. Put your palms up. Just enjoy the presence of the Lord. I love this verse --- Psalm 130 --- it says, “I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope.” Palms up … Psalm 130. “I wait, my soul waits …” Just be still. Just stop.

Try this --- five minutes. Then go to ten. Maybe fifteen. You have thirty days. I bet you can go to thirty minutes. Just be alone.

The second discipline we’re going to try for thirty days is to be quiet. Quiet is --- we’re living in a noisy world and so you do what you have to do so that you turn off the
noise. One of the problems I have with this, and I’ve learned so much for this experience this summer, is that I love music. I love it too much. And I have some great equipment to hear music. And music is a beautiful thing. It has power, it has beauty. For worship purposes, if you’re in a context of devotion. But music was chasing out my quiet. And I’ve learned that quiet is what I need to --- quote --- “be here.” And now a major part of my devotion is quiet; silence. Just this weekend I’ve been painting the inside of the house. Boy, I tell you what, you can paint with classic rock. You can get stuff done with that kind of stuff playing loud and often. And this time I didn’t go to praise and worship music either. I just --- nothing. Two days of just painting with quiet. Wow. It took some time.

Find a place that’s alone and quiet. Some of you ADHD people --- hey, can I throw a bone out to you? Have a little pad of paper next to you. As soon as you have that thought, write it down. Now it’s done. Back to being quiet.

Psalm 62:1
My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation.

Silence is the next one. Solitude. Quiet. Silence. Quiet means --- it’s directed towards your ears. Silence is directed towards your tongue. Don’t talk. Don’t talk. You’re listening. Don’t talk --- listen. Did you know that God whispers? It has to be quiet and He won’t talk over you. And so in Psalm 62, David says, “My soul waits in silence for God only; from Him is my salvation.” That’s when we hear Him --- when we’re not talking, when we’re listening. That’s the palms up --- you’re receiving. Solitude. Quiet. Silence. Be still. That’s the discipline. That’s how you navigate in this siren call of technology that we’re surrounded with all the time, everywhere.

Here’s a new habit. It kind of combines all three of them. I was reading about it going into the class, and then Andy talked about it. His new discipline was expressed in the class. I’m doing it too. It’s so simple. Start each day like this – with solitude, silence, quiet. Here’s how I used to start my day. I’d walk outside, I’d walk into the kitchen, fire up the ice tea maker. While that’s being made, I’d go to the laptop, open it up and see what’s going on in the world. Why would I do that? What good could possibly come from opening up a laptop first thing in the
morning? And that’s what Andy was doing as well. And so, now while the tea’s being made I go outside. Just go outside, wherever outside is. Just stick your head out of a window. Whatever it takes, you go outside. And now you’re exposed to the illumination of God, right? We’re talking about the stars at night or the moon, maybe the sun itself. And you go outside in the weather --- it doesn’t matter. Your happiness is not contingent on weather patterns, right?

I was reading a novel by C. S. Lewis this week and it’s set in London. This really righteous couple says, “You know what? I just love weather.” And the woman says, “Oh, you mean good weather?” “No, all weather.” It was a dreadful day in London --- the fog and the rain and all that. “We’ve just learned to love weather. It’s just so … fun.” I thought, You know what? I need to learn to love heat, hot mornings --- hot, humid mornings. Because my soul’s health is not contingent on weather patterns. So, the tea’s being made, I go outside, I’m not going to open a screen until I go outside, just for few minutes, and drink it in. Look up into the trees, look at the sky, watch it move. Be part of something that was created by God. Pause. Enjoy.

Solitude and quiet and silence --- it’s a new way to live. It’s the simple things that can change our lives. It’s not the big choices, it’s the choice to change patterns. Because what you practice, you become. What you eat, you crave. Odysseus survived the Sirens because he knew the power of the Sirens and he knew the weakness of his own will. How come all the other sailors perished? They didn’t know or understand. That’s too bad. Or they didn’t prepare. Or maybe they just thought, When I get there, then I’ll choose. They became food.

This is what you do. You choose ahead of time who you’ll become and how you’ll get there. You choose now. Solitude. Quiet. Silence. And in that, what happens --- this is Christian and non-Christian both --- what happens to your soul is you start saying to God, No, no – You first. No, You talk. And what happens is you start bringing that to the rest of your life because your soul is filled and it’s healthy. Then you can go to other people and say, No, no --- you go first. No, I want to know who you are. I have empathy suddenly. I can enjoy the difference between your life and mine. I’m not going to project my life on your life. But I’m going to involve your soul with my soul. I’m not going to listen to respond; I’m going to listen to understand. That’s life-changing. That’s invigorating. It renews the soul. It energizes our mind --- these disciplines. Solitude. Quiet. Silence. Alone … with God, listening … for the whisper.

So, Grace, what do you say? Let’s get our souls in shape. A thirty-day challenge. One month free. Let’s see what happens when we change our patterns, change our practices. Let’s see
if it does, in fact, change our souls so that we might navigate the Sirens’ call, and we can use technology and not be used or abused by it. Let’s pray.

Just put your palms up.

Lord, would You give us a sweet taste of the refreshment that comes in solitude and silence and quiet? Would you give us that early, so that we might find a new addiction? A new addiction that brings us wholeness and completeness, that we might hear our Savior’s voice when He whispers? That we might feel the power and the courage of the Spirit when He directs us? That we might enjoy the fullness of Your love and Your transcendent nature? Lord, would you give us, not just the desire, but the courage and the fortitude to begin a new journey of alone with You? Solitude. Quiet. Silence. Let us be victors. Let us be a church of victors in an age of shipwrecks. We pray this for our church, for our lives, and we pray this in Jesus’ name. Amen.