

# **SUMMER DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION GUIDE**

## **PRAYER: SILENCE & SOLITUDE**

We live in an age of constant distraction and noise. Our world is literally noisy with cars on the road, planes overhead, sirens, and sounds of construction. Our world is also metaphorically noisy with the “noise” of politics, the latest trends, and endless opinions about everything. And to top it all off we have the never-ending distraction of emails, text messages, social media feeds, and content to stream. Our world is anything but quiet, still, or silent.

Although our distracting and noisy world is normal to us, it’s actually harmful when it comes to our relationship with Christ. That’s because for centuries Christians have valued silence and solitude as an essential spiritual practice, and our world makes no space for silence and solitude. This practice comes straight from Jesus himself who often withdrew to the *eremos*—translated “desert,” “desolate place,” or “quiet place”—in order to spend time with his Father and pray.

Jesus’ rhythm was to withdraw into silence and solitude and then enter back into the world around him to love and serve others, and he invites us to do the same. And when we withdraw, the Spirit is free to bring so many things to mind that won’t happen without quiet. Our deepest desires—which are often pushed down by the demands of everyday life—are given space to rise to the surface and we have the opportunity to bring them before God. We get distance from the circumstances that weigh us down and burden us and are able to “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Regarding this practice, Dallas Willard writes, “Solitude well practiced will break the power of busyness, haste, isolation, and loneliness. You will see that the world is not on your shoulders after all. You will find yourself, and God will find you in new ways...Far from being a mere absence, silence allows the reality of God to stand in the midst of your life. God does not ordinarily compete for our attention. In silence we come to attend.”

Our noisy lives leave little space for God because God doesn’t “shout” to get our attention. If we want to grow in our life with God we need to create space to quiet the noise by intentionally setting aside time for silence and solitude. Everything within and without makes this difficult—but this practice can be a powerful one.

### **PRACTICE**

During your 20-30 minutes of personal, undistracted time with God this week, spend 5-10 minutes of that time practicing silence and solitude. This will require finding a space and time where noise and distraction is minimal and leaving your phone in another room.

Once you’re in a quiet place, get comfortable, take a few deep breaths, and become aware that God is present with you. Your mind will become distracted quickly—that’s okay. When distractions come, simply let them pass and return to quiet before God. Use the remaining 10-20 minutes to pray and/or read Scripture, but during these 5-10 minutes simply practice silence.

For previous week’s guides, go to [redemptionokc.com/summerdevotions](https://redemptionokc.com/summerdevotions).



## **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

### **PSALM 127 | THE LORD OUR BUILDER**

#### **LEARNING THE WORD**

1. Each week this summer, our Reflection Guide will include a spiritual practice for you to engage in your personal devotional time. Begin this week by reading page one of the reflection guide. How have you personally experienced the benefits of silence and solitude with God?
2. Read Psalm 127 aloud. In verses 1-2, what phrases or words most jump out at you? What word(s) or ideas are repeated?
3. In verses 1-2, do you think the psalm saying that we should not work hard or seek to protect those we love? What is the main point the psalmist is making about these areas of our lives?
4. In verses 3-5, what is the example that is given of one way God may give to his beloved (note the phrase in verse 3: "from the Lord")? What image is used to describe this gift?

#### **LIVING THE WORD**

5. How important are the teachings of this pilgrim psalm to our spiritual journey toward maturity? How do we practically walk through life with a growing perspective or posture of dependence upon God?
6. When was the last time you asked God to build your life, watch over your efforts, and give you rest? Do you ever confess your striving to the Lord and relinquish your desire for control to him?
7. Read John 15:5. How does Jesus teaching reinforce and expand on the teaching of Psalm 127?
8. Close your time with 10-15 minutes praying that the *Lord will build* your life - confess your dependence upon the Lord; foster a posture and attitude of rest in his providence and care; ask God to "build" you, your family, your friends, your church, your work or schoolwork, your relationships, etc.

Practice this week: During your personal, undistracted time with the Lord this week, purposefully quiet yourself for 5-10 minutes of silence and solitude. Use these moments to cease from striving and worrying as you practice a posture of restfulness under God's providence and care.