

FOCUS

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

FOR ALL RESOURCES AVAILABLE
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FOCUSING ON HEALTHY SOLITUDE IN CHRIST DOLLY MINK

TEACHING
NOTES

INTRODUCTION AND PRAYER

Friends, these have been some challenging times. I don't know about you, but I have really felt stretched and pulled in many directions. I've been trying to be there for everyone and serve my Lord and my family in the very best ways I can; as women we tend to overextend ourselves in a very dangerous way. We "pour out" until there is nothing left to pour! We try to live a Titus 2 life, but we forget to take time to step away and spend time with the only One who can truly fill US up.

A study I read recently said that women are 16% more likely than men to feel "exhausted" or "worn out." Women both tend to agree to more work than they should, and they have a difficult time saying, "no," when asked to add a task to their schedule.

It's hard to say "no" to those we love and those we serve.

But we need to remember that we are no good to the kingdom when we are running on empty. We need to be filled.

In short, we need to retreat. I find that a bit ironic because I am presenting this lesson online since we weren't able to have our Leadership Retreat! Why? Because we are still under some measures of quarantine.

And who here or viewing online had a difficult time finding quiet time during quarantine? I think a lot of us did. I did hear some friends talking about how we were all going to come to new spiritual awakenings and epiphanies because we had so much time alone with the Spirit- um, not me! My house was full of off-spring working from home, furloughed, or home from work early because of COVID-19. I have been BUSY!

SO WHAT CAN WE DO TO SPEND TIME ALONE WITH THE FATHER IN A BUSY, CHANGING, POST-CORONAVIRUS WORLD? THAT'S WHAT I WANT TO EXPLORE WITH YOU OVER THE NEXT FEW MINUTES.

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1. BE INTENTIONAL

First, we must be INTENTIONAL. We can't wait for things to "lighten up."

Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits. These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. (Mark 6:7-13; 30-32)

Jesus had returned to His hometown of Nazareth and He had been walking among the villages teaching. He began to send the disciples out to do the ministry work; when the disciples returned, they told Him all they had done and He told them to "come and rest a while."

You see, Jesus knows we need rest.

In Ps 23 Jesus, our Good Shepherd, Who provides everything we need, "makes us to lie down in green pastures and leads us beside the still waters." He restores our soul. Sheep sometimes need to be made to lie down. The shepherd will then have to go to them and make them lie down. He's made sure that the green pasture that he has led them to is safe and will provide the nourishment they need as well as a comfortable place to rest. How long has it been since you have spent some "green pasture time?"

Whether you are a busy mom of little ones or a single woman or a retired widow- you need to set aside time to spend with the Father, both resting in Him and feasting on His Word. You need to allow Him to restore your soul.

» Create a space

Very early in Jesus's ministry we read that He "went to a lonely place to pray." (Mark 1:35) Right now your quiet time may not be able to be first thing in the morning, and finding a "lonely place" can be a real struggle.

» Make time, don't find time or wait.

But time alone with the Father must happen in order for you to draw near to Him and to allow Him refill you as His vessel. Make time, don't wait. Jesus didn't tell the disciples to rest "when they get a minute." He said, "Come."

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» **Be flexible but determined.**

Again, your time may need to change, depending on the season you are in- that's okay! Be flexible, but be determined.

Imagine, for a moment, what quiet time with the Father looked like for Jesus. Imagine yourself there, submitting to Him and allowing Him to speak to you. I've heard people say that their quiet time/ prayer time is in their car. That says a lot for how people drive. Quiet time needs to be devoted to the Lord- not added on or squeezed in. Establishing a true quiet time with the Father sets a great example for your family, as well. Children follow our examples, both bad and good. Wouldn't it be amazing to see our kids model our prayer life?

2. BE SURE

Next, you need to be "sure." As a leaders, we need to be sure of our position. If you are busy doing all of the work in your women's ministry, then who are you leading? Who are you developing as a leader?

» **Don't be afraid to delegate.**

In the passage we just read, Jesus sent out the disciples. Clearly Jesus could have done the work Himself. But He chose to send. He delegated. As leaders, we need to learn to delegate. Selecting and entrusting women with tasks allows them to use their gifting and to grow in their abilities and their skills.

Allowing women you serve with to perform tasks that do not have to be accomplished by you as the leader frees you up to spend time with the Father. Plus, our sisters will receive a blessing for their obedience, and you will too! Don't be afraid to delegate. It's biblical!

» **Make sure it's supposed to be you.**

In addition, as leaders, we need to be sure that what we are saying yes to is what we are supposed to be saying yes to. In *Discerning the Voice of God* by Priscilla Shirer, we learn that we only say yes to something if it aligns with Scripture. That's very true, but there is more than just that- we must make sure that what we say yes to is actually meant for us.

I know it's hard to understand, but you, and I, are not the only ones who can do the work of women's ministry. I'll give you a second to let that sink in.

While you think, consider Moses. 40 years in the desert and he didn't get to lead the Israelites into the promised land. It was not his task.

God doesn't need you. He doesn't need me. He will use me when He chooses and when it's not my task, I need to be ready to step aside for the one He intends to use.

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When He's ready, and when He knows I am ready, He will use me again. In the mean time, I will continue to seek Him. See how beautifully that works? Matthew 6:33 teaches us to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be given to us." When was the last time you focused on seeking Him?

3. BE CAREFUL

In addition, friends, be careful. There are many snares in ministry work that can take our time away from time with the Lord.

» Establish Boundaries

One of them is not establishing clear boundaries. During this quarantine a lot of lines were blurred. As the clock ticked it was easy to keep working, keep writing, keep making calls and checking on people. A few more minutes easily turned into a couple more hours and suddenly we can find we haven't taken time for ourselves, our husbands, our families, and even for the Lord. We can be so busy in ministry work, we leave God out of it!

» Set a time

How do we, as leaders, establish effective boundaries so that we can make time to spend with the Lord? Set a time. Add "quiet time" to your calendar.

While writing this I was going to say that we all are sure quick to put "hair appt" on our calendars and we all know you don't mess with them! I actually realized at that moment I had forgotten to make an appointment myself- so I did! I've worked with women long enough to know that hair appointments are non-negotiable. When scheduling meetings, we work around the hair.

IF MY HAIR APPTS ARE NOT UP FOR NEGOTIATION—DON'T YOU THINK I SHOULD NOT BE WILLING COMPROMISE ON MY QUIET TIME WITH GOD?

Next, set a timer if you need to! If you are forgetful, let that alarm remind you it's time to go to the Father. You can also make time to spend with the Lord by managing your time.

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» **Set a limit**

If you are meeting with someone on a regular basis, agree on a limit at the very beginning. To start, just say, "I have an hour to meet with you today." Boom. Done. I know- it's hard when you're in ministry because, for me, I think what if I'm not dealing with what God has brought to me? Trust me- He knows your heart and He will let you know.

Spending time with Him will help you to be keenly aware of how He works in your life and you will begin to trust His leading.

» **Recognize issues**

In addition, it's so important for leaders to be alert and able to recognize issues that may occur that make us feel uncomfortable. That can be the Holy Spirit showing us that this may not be a meeting that is for you. Not every person is right for every other person.

As I have learned that not everyone is there for me to minister to, I have learned to respect the fact that others are able to provide wisdom and good counsel to my sisters. We must celebrate that, and not show jealousy.

Leader, teacher, wife, mother, daughter, grandmother— you do not have to do it all. You are deceiving yourself if you think you do, and you are taking time away from the Lord. Check your heart if you think you do- there may be a pride issue there!

BY USING ALL HIS DAUGHTERS, OUR FATHER GIVES US ALL TIME TO SPEND WITH HIM. YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO IT ALL! REMEMBER: GOD IS IN CONTROL!

» **Respect Boundaries**

Now that we have established boundaries, we need to remember to respect others' boundaries. By not respecting others' boundaries, we can actually cause someone to stumble. If a friend can't meet with you for an early breakfast because of her quiet time, don't question that.

» **Social Media**

Practice restraint on social media. If in doubt of what that means, give space. Back off.

Pay attention to your screen time report. If it's greater than your time in the Word and with the Lord, that's a problem.

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Now I understand that many of us have our Bibles on our phones, we have devotionals, we have podcasts, and on and on. Two points on that:

1. I'm not saying reduce your screen time if that's where your Bible is.
2. Be careful not to spend more time listening to people tell you about God than you spend actually listening to God.

» **Relationships**

We also need to respect relationships. Build real relationships. We cannot spend quality time with the Lord (and others) when we are checking Facebook and Instagram every few minutes.

» **Privacy**

And finally, let's all respect each other's privacy. We all need time with the Father and we cannot do that if we are on social media, texting, and IMing. In this age of instant answers, give grace to your sister who doesn't answer right away; she may be in conversation with the Lord.

After Jesus had instructed the disciples to rest, He began to retreat from the crowd as well. But, the crowd was growing and clearly Jesus wanted to use this teaching opportunity; it was then that He fed the 5000. You may be getting ready to do a big task for the Lord; rest in Him and allow Him to prepare you for that!

In his book, *A Shepherd Looks at the Good Shepherd*, Philip Keller, himself a shepherd, explains the relationship a shepherd has with his sheep. In order to be able to lead the sheep and truly care for them, shepherds know their sheep. They hold the sheep, caressing them and checking them for any injury or illness. They handle each one, specifically getting to know the sheep and their behavior. They can't do that unless two things happen: they need to spend time with the sheep and the sheep have to be willing to spend time with them. Have you been neglecting your Shepherd?

I don't know what task the Father has for you next, but I do know He wants to spend time with you before He gives you your next assignment. Go to Him. He's waiting.