

Practicing Jesus' Way: Open Space

"Setting ourselves apart to be fully present with God"

Jesus' Way

Setting himself apart to be fully present with God.

Jesus modeled and taught the disciples a regular practice of escaping the commotion of daily life to be alone with God, often in silence, in solitude and in stillness. His life was busy, so he had to intentionally create the space to be with God. We also know that Jesus was completely open to God. He lived out his prayer, "Not my will, but yours be done." Nothing was held back. He was completely open to the Father.

Intentional & Natural.

The result of Jesus' practice of "open space" was that He was not only fully open and present with God in dedicated times. Jesus *remained* present with God *in the course of daily life*. This is the same transformation we can anticipate. First, we intentionally practice creating space and opening ourselves to God. Over time, that openness & presence becomes more natural even as we go about our daily lives

Open AND Space.

Both aspects of this practice are crucial and they must go together. We may feel as if we're "open" to God. But if our lives are already full of busyness and people and distractions and obligations, there's no space for God. Space doesn't work by itself either. Space alone is just "down-time." The impact of open space comes when we create space to be with God *and* we open ourselves to him. Open space is the context in which we learn to bring our whole self before God openly, vulnerably, and trusting in God's goodness and gentleness: our thoughts, emotions, concerns, failures, family, friends, work, and ministry.

Practicing Jesus' Way

Frequency.

Ideally, *open space* is a daily practice. This should be our intention. However, none of us is likely to achieve this ideal. This is perfectly fine. If our intention is to set ourselves apart and open ourselves to God every single day and we actually only practice this 3-4 times each week, that is wonderful!

Duration.

A suggested timeframe is one 20 minute period each day (or morning and evening). This can be adjusted as we grow and develop in the practice. It can also be adjusted based on the time available on a given day or shortened in response to unanticipated disruptions.

Getting Started.

- Stillness can be very challenging at first - our inner "noise" even more than outer. Don't worry. It's like anything else worth doing in life - we start off bad at it and then quickly improve. It can take a few tries at creating a space that works for you. And opening ourselves to God doesn't come all at once, it's an ongoing process.
- Find 20 minutes in which you can set yourself apart from distractions, obligations, and people.
- Consistency (same time/place each day) is recommended.
- The exact circumstances aren't important. You need to figure out what works for you. Do what you need to do to create the space and to become increasingly open to God in that space.