

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
“Solitude”
Covenant Group Curriculum, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist
Congregation, Davie, FL

Opening Meditation/Music/Silence/Chalice Lighting (whichever one(s) you choose to do)

Opening Words:

“As we progress on the spiritual path, periodic withdrawal from the world, in time, becomes a necessity. The occasional retreat from the world will benefit us, we will come out stronger and clearer. If we desire to find the highest within ourselves we must separate ourselves from the clamorous atmosphere of the world, in search of the quieter places within. Most often our inner voice will speak to us in absolute quietness. When we cultivate time for silence we begin to learn the art of being still, the art of being alone, the art of communion with God. This discipline will help balance us and ground us.

- *Natasha Dern*

Check-in/Sharing

Topic/Reading:

“Loneliness can be conquered only by those who can bear solitude.”

- *Paul Tillich*

“There is a world of difference between solitude and loneliness, though the two terms are often used interchangeably.

From the outside, solitude and loneliness look a lot alike. Both are characterized by solitariness. But all resemblance ends at the surface.

Loneliness is a negative state, marked by a sense of isolation. One feels that something is missing. It is possible to be with people and still feel lonely--perhaps the most bitter form of loneliness.

Solitude is the state of being alone without being lonely. It is a positive and constructive state of engagement with oneself. Solitude is desirable, a state of being alone where you provide yourself wonderful and sufficient company.

Solitude is a time that can be used for reflection, inner searching or growth or enjoyment of some kind. Deep reading requires solitude, so does experiencing the beauty of nature. Thinking and creativity usually do too.

Solitude suggests peacefulness stemming from a state of inner richness. It is a means of enjoying the quiet and whatever it brings. It is something we cultivate. Solitude is refreshing; an opportunity to renew ourselves.

We all need periods of solitude, although temperamentally we probably differ in the amount of solitude we need. Some solitude is essential; It gives us time to explore and know ourselves. It is the necessary counterpoint to intimacy, what allows us to have a self worthy of sharing. Solitude gives us a chance to regain perspective. It renews us for the challenges of life. It allows us to get (back) into the position of driving our own lives, rather than having them run by schedules and demands from without.

Solitude restores body and mind. Loneliness depletes them.”

- *Hara Estroff Marano*

Questions for consideration:

Do you find it easy or difficult to distinguish loneliness from solitude?

When is solitude most important to you?

Do you seek out times for solitude or do you suddenly find yourself in it?

What do you find in solitude—peace, God, harmony, silence, renewal...what else?

Likes and Wishes/Feedback

Closing Words:

“I have a great deal of company in the house, especially in the morning when nobody calls.”

- *Henry David Thoreau*

Amen. May you live in blessing.