Welcome to Women at CA's Morning of Solitude. How lovely it is to enter the first official day of Spring by sitting at the feet of Jesus! We invite you to be fully open in your time of solitude. Feel free to come undone in the silence of nature and worship the King and Creator apart from all the noise and responsibilities of life.

Jesus practiced silence and solitude often with the Father during His time on earth. It was His fuel that recharged Him for all that He was called to do. A working definition for solitude comes from John Mark Comer’s book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*:

“[Solitude is] intentional time in the quiet to be alone with God, and our own soul. It’s the space we make for God to love us, and to transform us into people of love. There are two dimensions of silence – external and internal. External is when we get away from all the people and noise and stimuli and let our body come to quiet. Internal – which is harder to do – is when we calm and center our mind on God; we come to a kind of mental and emotional rest in God.”

We invite you this morning to get away and rest in the presence of God. To spend time with Him in His Word, to ponder His majesty and meditate on His goodness. Our hope is that by carving out sacred space, it will help you to attune your heart to the Father’s voice and to practice the ancient rhythm of silence, quieting your heart and mind to focus on the King. The goal is not to get through every portion of the guide, but rather the resources are here to help you connect to God. You can feel free to skip any part or dwell on one question the entire time. There are no grades given for this!

May you hear the voice of Him who calls you His Beloved, and may you commune with the God who speaks hope, joy, peace and love over you. We pray that you will experience the joy of new beginnings today: spring has come, winter is gone.

Speak, Lord Jesus, in this place of solitude, for your servant is listening.
“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. Silence also brings Sabbath to you. It completes solitude, for without it you cannot be alone. 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.”

- Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship*
To Begin

We invite you to find a quiet place where you can enjoy the beauty of God’s creation, away from any distractions or responsibilities. We invite you to spend 90 minutes to two hours in solitude, and of course you can spend more if you’d like! We encourage you to put your phone on silent and keep it face down; you may set a timer on your phone so that time won’t be a distraction for you, if you wish.

Once you are settled in and have found a comfortable seat, close your eyes and invite God to meet with you here in this place. Consider praying something like this:

“Jesus, I invite you to meet with me here now. I want to hear from you. Help me to be present to your voice. Remove any distractions that would keep my focus from you.”

Write out any hopes or fears you have entering into this time with Jesus.
Clearing our Minds

Read the following passage from Luke 10:38-42 (NIV):

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

“Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

We all have a tendency to be like Martha: distracted and worried about many things. Take the next 10 minutes to write down all the responsibilities and worries you are carrying right now. Use the space below to list out anything on your mind, or as some would say, “brain dump” to clear your head for God to speak to you. Give these distractions and worries to the Lord for your time of solitude, trusting He cares and is big enough to hold them.
Breathing

Now that you have given your distractions and concerns to the Lord, spend the next 5 minutes focusing on your breathing. Close your eyes. Concentrate on your inhaling and exhaling. Take deep breaths in slowly, and then exhale at the same pace. Do not judge yourself in this process if your breaths are shallow; simply take note of your breathing and become aware of slowing it down. Enjoy and savor the oxygen as it fills your lungs.

Once your breathing has slowed into a peaceful rhythm, say these one sentence prayers below on each inhale and exhale.

Inhale: I breathe in joy  
Exhale: I release any anxiety

Inhale: I welcome your presence  
Exhale: I give you my worries

Inhale: I invite you to speak  
Exhale: I surrender to your love

You can make up your own breath prayers as well. List any that come to mind here.
Silence

Now that we have slowed our breathing, we want to take time to be still and let our souls rest. Silence allows our souls to breathe with God, but it takes practice. Spend the next 10 minutes in silence, quieting your mind, letting go of your thoughts and distractions, and centering your attention on Jesus. The goal of silence is to close our souls to the noise of the world and instead become increasingly attentive to God and His presence.

Be gentle with yourself as you seek to find peace in the stillness and become aware of God. If your mind starts to wander or you get distracted, simply and graciously direct your thoughts back to Him. Ask God to close out distractions so you can be attentive to Him. What might God be saying to you? Write down any thoughts or feelings that come to mind.
“In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence.

To make possible true inner silence, practice:

Silence of the eyes, by seeking always the beauty and goodness of God everywhere, and closing them to the faults of others and to all that is sinful and disturbing to the soul.

Silence of the ears, by listening always to the voice of God and to the cry of the poor and the needy, and closing them to all other voices that come from fallen human nature, such as gossip, tale bearing, and uncharitable words.

Silence of the tongue, by praising God and speaking the life-giving Word of God that is the truth, that enlightens and inspires, brings peace, hope, and joy; and by refraining from self-defense and every word that causes darkness, turmoil, pain, and death.

Silence of the mind, by opening it to the truth and knowledge of God in prayer and contemplation, like Mary who pondered the marvels of the Lord in her heart, and by closing it to all untruths, distractions, destructive thoughts, rash judgments, false suspicions of others, vengeful thoughts, and desires.

Silence of the heart, by loving God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength; loving one another as God loves; and avoiding all selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, and greed.”

- Mother Teresa, In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories and Prayers
We were created to worship and exalt God. Praise is simply expressing our admiration of Him. Take the next 10-15 minutes to praise God for who He is. This may include reading the suggested Psalm, or singing your favorite worship song out loud, or writing out your favorite characteristics and attributes of God, or listing all the good things God has done in your life, or maybe all of the above! However you decide to praise God, make Him the focal point as you celebrate His goodness. Turning our affection and admiration towards God switches our heart’s attention off of us and onto Him who is worthy of our love and adoration.

Read Psalm 145:1-16 (NIV) on the next page and underline anything you see about God that is worthy of praise. Rewrite the Psalm in your own words in the side margin. Once you are done, complete the sentence, “I praise you God because ___________________.”
Psalm 145:1-16
A psalm of praise. Of David.

1 I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.
2 Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.

3 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.
4 One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.
5 They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—and I will meditate on your wonderful works.
6 They tell of the power of your awesome works—and I will proclaim your great deeds.
7 They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.

9 The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.
10 All your works praise you, Lord; your faithful people extol you.
11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might,
12 so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations.

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.
14 The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.
16 You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.
Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is Latin for “divine reading.” It’s a practice of reading God’s Word where you read a Bible passage or verse several times in a row, slowly, with the goal of paying attention to what God might want to say to you through His Word.

We invite you to read Psalm 46 (NIV) on the following page three times slowly. After each of the readings, spend 2 minutes in silence and invite God to speak to you. Record your observations after each reading. If you don’t feel like anything stood out to you, that is okay.

1) First reading of the passage: LISTEN
   As you read the passage, listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. Allow it to arise from the passage as if it is God’s invitation for you today. Sit in silence repeating the word or phrase in your head.

2) Second reading of the passage: PONDER
   As you read the passage again, ask God for a word or phrase that speaks to your life and why it has connected with you. It may be the same word as before, or a different word. Ponder it carefully. Don’t worry if you get distracted – it may be part of your response to offer it to God. Sit in silence with the word or sentence that stood out to you this time and reflect on why it captured your attention.

3) Third reading of the passage: PRAY
   As you read the passage for the last time, ask what Christ is calling you to. What is it that you need to do or consider or relinquish or take on as a result of what God is saying to you through whatever word or phrase stood out to you? In the silence that follows the reading, pray for the grace of the Spirit to plant this word in your heart.
Psalm 46

1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

2 Therefore we do not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,

3 though the waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.

6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.

7 The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

8 Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.

9 He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

10 He says, “Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in all the earth.”

11 The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
**Drawing**

In the space below, draw your impressions from the Lectio Divina passage on Psalm 46. What did God reveal to you in the reading of the passage? If you didn’t sense a specific word or phrase that stood out to you during Lectio Divina, spend time reading Psalm 46 again and draw whatever comes to mind as your own response to the Psalm.
**Listening Prayer**

Invite the Holy Spirit to sit with you and to reveal what He is doing in your heart right now. Sit in silence and wait. You may not see or hear anything immediately, that’s okay. Our goal in this time of prayer is to ask God to speak, and then to listen to what He might want to say to us. If anything comes to mind, write it down.

Invite the Holy Spirit to show you what areas of your life He desires to bring about new beginnings. Ask Him to reveal to you what these new beginnings might look like. Is there anything specific He wants you to know, see or pray about?

Next, ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there is anything He wants you to let go of or release to Him. What does it look like to surrender to Him?
**Reflection Questions**

Spend the next 10 minutes reflecting on the following questions.

1. As we began our time of solitude, you were invited to write down any hopes or fears you had coming into the time. In what ways did God show up this morning and meet those hopes or calm those fears?

2. As we enter Spring today, a season of new beginnings, where do you feel like the Lord is inviting you to begin again? What are some areas of your life that need a transformation or that feel dead and you are asking God to bring new life into?
**Closing**

We want to conclude this time by wrapping up all we have heard from God in a simple word, image, phrase or picture that you can carry forth with you today to remind you of God’s nearness and affection for you.

Place your hands open on your lap with palms up. Close your eyes and ask the Lord to give you a word, image, phrase or picture as a parting gift to take with you from this time of solitude with Him. What does He place in your hands? What does He want you to remember from your time with Him this morning? Record your observations below.

As you end your time of solitude this morning, we invite you to spend 3 final minutes in silence. Thank God for how He showed up and met you today.
As You Go

We celebrate that you have created space to be with Jesus today! We encourage you not to rush home, but slowly walk back to your car and gracefully into your day. Continue to take deep breaths, and be reminded that God’s presence is with you always. Invite Him to go with you back into your daily life, and ask Him to give you His peace as you transition to the next thing on your calendar.

We look forward to seeing you on Zoom tonight at 7pm PST to celebrate what God has done! The link has been emailed to you. We will have a short time for breakout groups during the evening for you to share your experience with others.

Blessings on you as you go today, Beloved.