



## PRAYER HABITS

## CONVERSATION #6: THE MONASTIC CHALLENGE

### READ: ANCIENT RHYTHMS FOR MODERN TIMES

Long before podcasts, worship playlists, devotionals, and guided prayer apps existed, ordinary believers were trying to answer a simple question: *How do I actually stay close to God?* Some of them discovered something surprising. Growth didn't come from more noise, more words, or more activity. It came from **intentional withdrawal**. This conviction gave rise to the monastic tradition.

Monks weren't super-Christians or people who loved rules. They were men and women who realized something we still struggle with today: **life is loud, distracting, and spiritually draining**. So, they chose to regularly step away - not to escape the world, but to **re-center their hearts on God**. They built rhythms of silence, Scripture, prayer, and reflection into their lives so their faith wouldn't depend on someone else feeding them.

What they practiced wasn't complicated -but it was demanding. They learned to sit with God when nothing exciting happened. To pray when words ran out. To let Scripture shape their hearts instead of just informing their minds. That's the spirit behind this challenge.

This *Milestone Challenge* isn't about pretending to be a monk or copying ancient routines perfectly. It's about learning the same core lesson they learned: **spiritual growth requires intentional space**, especially when you're moving from being fed by others to learning how to feed yourself.

Up to this point, much of your prayer life may have been supported - guided prayers, group settings, structured prompts, or someone else setting the pace. This challenge asks you to take ownership. To plan the time. To stay when it feels awkward. To listen when God doesn't speak quickly. The purpose isn't to have a powerful emotional moment. The purpose is to practice **showing up on your own**. This challenge is a step toward maturity - learning to seek God not because someone scheduled it for you, but because your soul needs it.

### THE CHALLENGE:

Spiritual growth doesn't happen just by talking about prayer - it happens by practicing being with God. Until prayer is something you can sustain on your own, you'll continue to depend on others to lead, structure, or carry it for you. In this challenge, you'll take responsibility for creating space to meet with God - planning the time, removing distractions, and remaining present even when prayer feels quiet or unproductive. You won't be chasing a moment. You'll be practicing attentiveness, endurance, and trust.

### Challenge #3: THE MONASTIC CHALLENGE

Set aside a half day for a personal prayer retreat. Create intentional space away from noise and distraction, and engage God through Scripture, silence, written prayer, and listening - so prayer moves from something you experience when others lead it to something you practice because your soul needs it.

#### CHALLENGE DETAILS:

- Set aside 3-4 uninterrupted hours
- Choose a quiet, distraction-free location
- Bring Scripture, a journal, and a simple plan
- Use multiple prayer tools (not just one)
- Stay even when it feels uncomfortable or unproductive

#### A LIST TO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR RETREAT: Begin this with your Discipleship Partner(s)

1. **READ JEREMIAH 29:12-13** – To remind yourself why this challenge matters.
2. **Choose the Time:** Date \_\_\_\_\_ Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ End Time: \_\_\_\_\_
3. **Choose the Place (Silence Matters)**
  - a. Where will you go? (We recommend getting away from your normal spaces)
4. **Remove Distractions (Be Intentional):**
  - a. Decide before you begin
    - i. Phone: ☐ Off    ☐ Airplane Mode    ☐ Left in another room
    - ii. Music: ☐ None    ☐ Only instrumental (no lyrics)
5. **Make a list of what you will bring:** (Bible, Journal, Pen, Water, Snacks, Timer, Prayer Prompts?)
6. **Plan the beginning and ending:** We recommend starting and finishing strong.
7. **Research Different Prayer Exercises & Tools:** Do this with your Discipleship Partner(s)
  - a. Praying Scripture, Silence & Stillness, Written Prayers, Intercessory Prayer, etc.
  - b. Choose a few different types of prayer exercises before you go.

#### CLOSING THOUGHTS:

As you step into this challenge, remember that growth in prayer is rarely loud or dramatic. Much of what God does happens quietly as you choose to stay present, even when nothing seems to be happening. Time set apart with Him may not feel productive, but it is deeply formative.

This challenge is about learning to remain. And as you practice showing up on your own, you'll become less dependent on being guided and more confident seeking God, drawing strength from a prayer life that is becoming your own.