St. George on Yonge
Anglican

CONNECT GROUP – SEPTEMBER 14, 2026

Welcome back!

After our summer break, it will be good to reconnect, hear how everyone has been doing, and share what we have experienced as we have tried to build the practices of Scripture, Prayer and Sabbath into our everyday lives.
Today we will also begin our next practice: Solitude – intentionally stepping away from noise and distraction to be alone with God.

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for bringing us together again. Thank You for Your love, faithfulness, mercy and grace, and for continuing to work in each of our lives even when we are apart. Over these past months, we have been learning to create space for You through Scripture, Prayer and Sabbath.
Thank You for what You have already taught us. Forgive us for the times when busyness, distractions and our own priorities have taken our attention away from You.
As we come together again, give us open hearts and minds to learn from Your Word and from one another. Help us not simply to learn about these practices, but to put them into practice in our daily lives.
Holy Spirit, as we intentionally make room for You, continue Your work in us. Renew our minds, shape our character, strengthen our faith, and make us more like Jesus.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Reflection: Scripture, Prayer and Sabbath

Over the summer, we have had an opportunity to continue practising the three rhythms we have studied so far: Scripture, Prayer and Sabbath.
This is not about whether we practised them perfectly. It is an opportunity to honestly share what worked, what was difficult, and what God may have been teaching us.

Discussion Questions

a. Of the three practices—**Scripture, Prayer and Sabbath**—which has been easiest for you to build into your life? Which has been the most difficult?
b. What have you tried over the past two months? Has any practice begun to become a more natural part of your daily or weekly rhythm?
c. What have been your biggest challenges—busyness, distraction, consistency, motivation, family or work commitments, or something else?
d. Is there anything you have learned about God, yourself, or the way you are living through these practices?
e. Is there one change you would like to make as we begin again?

Scripture Reading

Mark 1:32–39

32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon
possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had
various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons
speak because they knew who he was. 35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark,
Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon
and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed:
"Everyone is looking for you!" 38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby
villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled
throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Introducing the Next Practice: Solitude

What is Solitude?

- Solitude is intentionally stepping away from people, activity, noise and distraction for a time so that we can be alone with God and give Him our undivided attention.
- It is not isolation, loneliness, emptying our minds, or simply being alone.
- In solitude we slow down, become still before God, pray, reflect on Scripture, listen and honestly bring before Him what is happening within us.

Why Does It Matter?

- We live surrounded by noise—work, responsibilities, conversations, phones, messages, entertainment and constant information. We can even be busy doing good things and yet rarely give God our undivided attention.
- Solitude helps us step away from competing voices so that we can become more attentive to God and to what is happening within us**.**
- The practice itself does not transform us; the **Holy Spirit does**. Solitude creates intentional space where we can become more attentive to His work as He searches us, renews us, guides us, strengthens us and gradually makes us more like Jesus.

The Pattern of Jesus: Retreat and Return

Jesus regularly withdrew to quiet places to pray:

- He went to a solitary place after intense ministry — Mark 1:35.
- As the crowds increased, He continued withdrawing to pray — Luke 5:15–16.
- Before choosing the Twelve, He spent extended time with the Father — Luke 6:12–13.
- In times of grief and pressure, He withdrew to pray — Matthew 14:13, 23.
- Before the cross, He withdrew in Gethsemane and surrendered His will to the Father — Matthew 26:36–46.

Jesus did not retreat to escape His calling. He retreated so that He could return to it.

Discussion Questions

a. When you hear the words silence and solitude, what comes to mind? Does being quiet and alone with God feel comfortable or difficult for you?
b. What are the main sources of noise and distraction in your life at present?
c. Why do you think Jesus intentionally withdrew to quiet places even when people were looking for Him and there was still work to be done?
d. What do you think might become more noticeable in your own life if you regularly became quiet before God?
e. What would you need to put aside or change in order to give God your undivided attention for just 5–10 minutes each day?

Rule of Life Commitment – Your Two-Week Practice

For the next two weeks, simply begin.

a. Choose a quiet place and regular time, and practise 5–10 minutes of solitude at least five days each week.
b. Put your phone away and become still before God. Read a few verses from a Psalm or Gospel to focus your attention on Him. Talk honestly to God, then spend a little time quietly with Him.
c. When your mind becomes distracted, don't become discouraged. Simply return your attention to God.
d. Finish by thanking Him.
e. If helpful, write one sentence afterwards: “Today I noticed…”

Remember:

Don't ask, “Did something amazing happen?” Ask, “Did I faithfully make space to be with God?”

The goal over these next two weeks is not to become good at silence. It is to begin learning how to intentionally step away from distraction so that we can be fully present to God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for bringing us together again and for what You have reminded us of today.
Thank You for the example of Jesus, who regularly stepped away from the crowds and demands around Him to spend time alone with You.
As we begin practising solitude over these next two weeks, help us to make room for You.
Teach us to slow down, become still, and come honestly into Your presence.
We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.