

## **When Alone, Seek God's Face**

British Summer Time begins this Sunday - Time to get outdoors, enjoy yourselves, get together, invite neighbours and friends for a BBQ ..... ah, right, OK We just can't right now!

### **What do you do when you are not allowed to do what you normally do?**

A Question the World is asking

One part of my job - Mission in the Outdoors!!!! How do I do that?

I guess for a small few it is a dream come true - *'I want to be alone'*

It is true that I quite like my own company but NO I do not want to be alone.

I have my wife Jackie for company and we can get out for our essential shopping and our daily exercise  
and we should get out in the garden and sort the mess out!

But for us, like the rest of the world, many of our plans are on hold.

### **So What do you do when you are not allowed to do what you normally do?**

I have been sent so many funny clips and stunts that people have put together

Here is my favourite - *Italian first few days*

It's fantastic seeing peoples sense of humour come to the fore in these times.

Also of course, particularly encouraging is the numbers of people volunteering in all manner of ways.

Wasn't it great to go outside and clap NHS workers the other night?  
we had a great chat with our neighbours, at an appropriate distance

Then there are the multitudes of suggestions coming to us as to how to keep active

Have you been keeping up with Joe Wicks doing primary school PE?  
or the Green Goddess on breakfast TV?  
or Jamie Oliver's 'keep on cooking' - making the most of what's in your larder.

I have been encouraging you in the church to get on Zoom and WhatsApp to connect with each other.

It is a bit of a surprise to me to be a technical help desk in this time!

It has though been the highlight of my week to see in some of you, total excitement and hilarity as you have seen each other appear on your computers tablets and phone screens.

Many in our church don't have access to any of these and are therefore probably not able to view this message, but I am so grateful in the knowledge that you are still phoning and checking on each other.

One thing that is coming home to those of us who are asking **What do you do when you are not allowed to do what you normally do?** is that for some people this has brought very little change to their lives.

Well before this crisis they were shut in because of health or age.  
Spending endless hours on their own has been the norm for them.  
I have a prayer that when we come out of this  
loneliness will be the experience of fewer people.  
I am praying for more initiatives for people to visit the housebound and lonely.

But still, right now, the question remains for most of us, **What do you do when you are not allowed to do what you normally do?**

As well as the garden getting some attention,  
the obligatory spring clean,  
under-stairs cupboards being cleaned out,  
garages being sorted and a million and one other around the house jobs that have been put off for years getting sorted - What else are we going to do?

Oh I have just remembered a toilet flush part that I bought two years ago that still hasn't been fitted. I wonder if it will get done?

But here is another suggestion, from your Pastor, as to what you could spend a little more time on as you ask **What do you do when you are not allowed to do what you normally do?**

**Spend more time 'Seeking God's Face'** It's something God tells us to do anyway and it's something that we have to align our wills to do

**Psalms 27:8 (New King James Version)**

***When You said, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."***

The Lord wants us to spend more time seeking him and we have less excuses now.

Significant things happen, when God's people are forced to spend time alone

We have seen, in our recent series in Colossians how Paul when in Prison used the time to pray for the churches he had established directly or indirectly and wrote letters to many of them.

Though of course he was still allowed visitors!

There are many examples of significant things happening to God's people when they were forced to be alone.

Moses when tending his father in law's flocks heard from God when he saw the burning bush.

Another shepherd boy David learnt to write songs about God's dealing with humanity.

When Jacob was left alone he wrestled with God and was recommissioned.

Noah and his family were in isolation together, with a fair few animals, and learnt to trust God for an unknown future.

Jesus of course frequently sought to be on his own with his Father and had to find lonely places to do so.

John when imprisoned in solitude on an island had the most remarkable vision of Revelation.

What we are experiencing now is far from a prison sentence.

Whilst we face a huge world wide crisis we need to seek God's face,  
we need to pray for our World and the World Leaders.  
But we also need to seek God's face for who He can be to us right now.  
We can learn things that our hurried, cluttered lives have prevented us from leaning.

Perhaps we can learn from the likes of the Desert Fathers who sort **Solitude?**

*'the Desert Fathers show us, by their examples, how to confront the chaotic impulses of the soul which drive us away from that still point where God is waiting'. (Barry McDonald in the foreword to In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Father and Mothers by Rev. John Chryssavgis)*

I am not going to tell you what you can learn.

But I would ask you to share over these next weeks what you are learning.

We know that this time will end.

God said right at the beginning of time that it was not good for us to be alone (Genesis 2:18)

When this time does end, the world will not be the same as it was before.  
I pray that as God's people we will have learnt in Solitude, things of God that will have sustained us in this time and equipped us for the times ahead.

Our Father, come to us in fresh ways. We know that you always accompany us, we are never alone, but, we pray, may your Holy Spirit cause our spirits to say 'Your face O Lord, I will seek'

God Bless you, and do tell me **What you are doing, when you are not allowed to do what you normally do?**