

Alone with God for Young Adults
Clayton Lowell

Big Idea: Being alone with God sets up the foundation for the rest of your life.

Main Scriptures:

Matthew 28:20

1 Peter 5:7

2 Timothy 1:7

Romans 12:1-2

James 1:5

Matthew 7:24-25

My Journey

My name is Clayton! I am 29 years old and live in Granbury with my wife Amber and my daughter Olivia. I have spent most of my time at StoneWater as a student pastor, but I have been spending more and more time with young adults at our church. I have spent a lot of time thinking about the transition I made ten years ago, from childhood to adulthood. I don't know about you - but it was hard for me. I missed being surrounded by people I loved, both in my family and at my home church, where I met Jesus for the first time. I missed the routine that was set into place for me to get to know God. Adulthood came, the choice to follow Him truly became my own, and I struggled mightily. I was suddenly, for the first time in my life, alone. And I didn't know what to do.

Being alone with God and being alone are not the same.

The first time you live alone is a liberating experience. Your schedule becomes your own, and the freedom to choose how to spend your time however you see fit is brand new. For me, the first few months of freedom included many late-night Taco Bell runs, video games, and any responsibilities I had shot to the bottom of my priority list. If you are a young adult reading this, you are in such a unique stage in life. The relationships and connection to the family that raised you are starting to look different, while you may not have found or built a new family or community of people to do life with. That change, coupled with a growing list of ways to pass the time (Netflix binging, Instagram scrolling, and the list goes on), can lead to more alone time than you have ever had before. However, the truth is that being alone and being alone with God are two very different things.

Our culture has tricked us into believing that relationships don't have to grow in the physical presence of other people. While we have never had more options for entertainment at home, that is one of the most dangerous places to be. Young adults are lonely and struggling. There is a difference between being alone and being lonely. Loneliness is a feeling that comes from being disconnected from the people around us and from God.

According to a survey conducted by the Barna group, a Christian research organization, 23 percent of young adults regularly feel lonely and isolated. Fifteen percent of young adult Christians believe that loneliness is embarrassing, and 25 percent say that being alone is always bad. Do you feel lonely? Does the thought of spending time alone with God scare you?

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Before you even start, remind yourself of this truth: you are never alone. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus says, "I am with you always, to the very end of the age." He is with you. He has never forsaken you or forgotten about you. He wants you to cast your cares and anxieties on Him because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). When you are alone with God, you aren't alone. You are in the presence of a King who loves you, pursues you and wants a relationship with you.

Before you continue reading, spend a few minutes and take an inventory of your past week with the questions below. The answers to these questions may reveal new things about you that you have never addressed before. If you have a desire for intimacy and closeness with Jesus, it starts with us and how we spend our moments when no one else is around. We need to re-learn how to be alone. How much time did you have by yourself this past week? How was that time spent? Are you comfortable in moments of solitude, or do you find yourself feeling lonely? Have you consumed anything this past week to numb the pain of loneliness? Examples could include TV or social media binging, pornography, drugs or alcohol, overeating, etc.

How to build a habit

Think about everything you did yesterday. Run through your schedule in your mind.

Think about the things you consciously made a choice to do, like going to the grocery store, completing a work task, or cleaning up the house. Now, think about the things you did that you did not even think about. Did you think about how to put toothpaste on your toothbrush? Did you think about how to put your keys in the truck and how to put the truck in reverse? Or did you just do it? Research has shown that the average adult male makes around 35,000 decisions a day.

As I am writing this; I can't even think of 20 decisions I made this week! The truth is many of the choices we make have become second nature to us because of the importance of the task and the significance of completing it in our everyday lives. You may read the words "habit" or "discipline" and be a little spooked. Don't be! We see over and over again in the Bible how important living a disciplined life is to God. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline."

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 compares being a follower of Jesus to being a competitive athlete who trains and makes their body their slave in order to win the prize. Self-control is one of the fruits of the Spirit laid out in Galatians 5. I think Romans 12:1-2 says it best - "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Trusting in Jesus means acknowledging that the life we live is not ours. Our lives are a sacrifice to the one who sacrificed His son for us - this is our calling! As we offer ourselves as living sacrifices to God, and as we commit to being transformed by the renewing of our minds, our habits must change.

As a young adult, your years in your 20s are the best years to form habits that stick. What

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are the habits that you have in your life right now? Some of them may be bad habits you have been wanting to change, while others may be habits you have worked hard to cultivate. Whether you realize it or not, building a habit starts with a time, a place, and a plan. My hope for you (and my hope for me as well) is that time alone with God becomes a natural habit that marks our life. It needs to become a habit! So, start with time. What is a consistent time that you know you will be able to be alone? There are moments when we will want to set aside hours or days at a time to be alone with God, but start with a normal day. Is there a time in your daily life when you know you will rarely have other things scheduled? Is there a time every day that you are spending doing something else but are ready to replace that with alone time with God?

Start with time. Then, pick a place. Quality time with God becomes a whole lot less quality when you are surrounded by distractions. When you are trying to build a habit, don't put yourself in a spot where you are tempted by things that will pull away your focus. This could be in a room with your roommate, a place with your phone in your lap and the TV on in the background, in the kitchen with a full sink of dishes ready to be done... It could be anything. If you are anything like me, I can find just about anything to distract me. The place is important! You're building a habit- you have a time, you have a place, and last but not least is the plan.

When you hear the words "habit" or "discipline," what comes to mind?
When is a consistent time that you can be alone with God?
Where is a consistent place where you can be alone with God?

How to be alone with God

How amazing is it that through Jesus, we have direct access to God? Not only can we come to Him and talk to Him - but He actually wants us to. He wants a deep and meaningful relationship with you. I think about the people in my life who are most important to me, and there is a direct correlation between the amount of time I spend with them and the amount of space they take up in my heart. Closeness with God comes with time alone with God. They go hand in hand. We see Jesus often go to secluded places to pray, to seek God, and to be alone with Him. If it is good enough for Jesus, it should be good enough for us!

As you read this, you may be in college figuring out what the next phase of your life will look like. You may be in your first job, trying to decide how to get your career on the right track. You may be newly married or starting a family and hoping to build a marriage that lasts. Young adults like us are in the foundation-building phase of life. The decisions we make and the habits we start now set the course for how our lives will turn out. As you commit to being alone with God, I don't want you to skip the foundation building. I know that for some of you reading this, it could be your first time committing to a time, place, and rhythm of being alone with Him. Don't be intimidated! Your plan of being alone with God should start with a foundation of listening and asking.

Setting a time and place to be alone with God gives us the rare opportunity to actually be still before the Lord. 1 Kings tells the story of Elijah hearing from God not in the loud moments but in the gentle whisper. When we get to a place where distractions and noise are removed, we

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become ready to listen and hear what God wants to speak to us. And how does God speak to us? Primarily through His Word! Think about this - every time you open the Bible, God's words are literally staring at you on the page. That is amazing! I don't want our generation to take this for granted. God's word gives us everything we need. If you have been intimidated about the Bible in the past, aren't sure where to start, or feel like you don't get anything out of it when you do read, I want to give you permission and encouragement to go SLOW.

The most incredible moments of alone time I have had with God are when I read just one, two, or three verses at a time. Don't feel like you have to follow a "finish the Bible in a year" plan. God is not in a hurry; He just wants time with you. We hear from God through the Bible, and then we listen and ask Him what He wants to show us. This is the good stuff! James 1:5 says, "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." How often, when you are faced with a decision, are going through a hard time in your life, or need God to show up, you skip asking for wisdom and go straight for asking for what you want? God wants us to ask Him for anything, and He wants to give generously to us. When I feel far from God, it is when I am not asking for wisdom and listening for a reply. When I don't take the time to listen, I often miss His answers or, even worse, believe that He never answers!

As you begin to build your foundation of being alone with God, I encourage you to start a journal to list the things you and God are talking about. If you are asking Him for wisdom? Write it down. If you are praying for new friends? Write it down. Are you praying for reconciliation with your family? Write that down! You don't have to be a professional journalist; you're just keeping up with a list. Our memories aren't great. What this list can do for us is. This list will cause us to slow down, to be specific in what we are listening to God for, and remind us how God answers us when we call out to Him. During your alone time with God, you can look back over the course of your life and remember when God spoke, how He answered, and how He was faithful all along the way.

Is it more difficult for you to listen to God speaking or to ask God to speak in the first place? Do you ever feel like you miss it when God answers your prayers? Will it be hard for you to go slow as you read the Bible and listen to God? Where will you start?

Life-Change Now

I want to finish with Matthew 7:24-25 which says, "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock." Relationship with Jesus is the foundation of our lives. If you are a young adult reading this, you are in the foundation-building phase of life. Don't miss this. A deep, intimate relationship with Christ that comes from being consistently alone with God is what will give you the strength and confidence to withstand the storms in this life. No spouse, no friend, no job, no amount of money, or success can provide stability like a close relationship with Jesus. If you have never trusted Him and given your life to Him, I pray you will do that now, wherever you are reading. If you are ready to take the next step in your

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relationship with Him, start today. Find a time, find a place, and make a plan, and be ready to hear God speak.