

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook- Most of the information in this handbook is taken from Celebration of Discipline by Richard Foster. It won't take the place of reading the book! But it may help you get started. Be sure to fill out and use the Spiritual Discipline scheduler at the back of this document. We will be adding to this handbook in the coming weeks.

Inward Disciplines

Meditation

In contemporary society our adversary majors in three things; noise, hurry and crowds. If we are kept busy enough we simply won't have time for the deeper things of life.

Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God's voice and obey his word. It doesn't involve any secret mantras, nor any mental gymnastics, no esoteric flight into the cosmic consciousness. The truth of the matter is that the Great God of the universe the creator of all things desires our fellowship.

The purpose of meditation is to grow into a familiar friendship with Jesus. He walks with me and talks with ceases to be pious jargon and instead becomes a straight forward description of our daily life.

Guidelines for Meditation

- Remember that meditation is not emptying our minds but filling our minds with the mind of Christ
- Meditation can only be learned by meditating so begin
- Commit a specific place and time each day to the practice of meditation- start out with a short time maybe 15 minutes and work up.
- Posture is only important in that you should be comfortable
- To start pick a passage in scripture to meditate on... it is not the study of the passage, it is letting God speak to you through it. You aren't trying to find an interpretation or even an application (however you might) the point is to hear and obey God's word through it. You should literally spend days or even weeks on a single passage.
- Sanctify your imagination- put yourself in the passage, become part of the story, sense it, smell it, listen to it, think about the unspoken words, look at it from every point of view by entering into each of the characters point of view.

Prayer

Prayer catapults us onto the frontier of the spiritual life. Of all the spiritual disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with the Father. Real prayer is life creating and life changing. To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us. If we are unwilling to change, we will abandon prayer as a noticeable characteristic of our lives

Prayer is something that we learn- the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray. So don't be afraid to try, but ask the Lord to teach you and then begin. Expect to be a better prayer a year from now...

Remember Moses prayed boldly because he believed his prayers could change things, even God's mind. (There's something to meditate on)

A good book, simple to read and very helpful is To Busy Not To Pray, by Bill Hybels

Guidelines for Prayer

- Don't get disillusioned- pray is a life long journey. Begin slow.
- Use www.biblegateway.com to find the key word pray (prayer, prays) in the gospels and look at how many times Jesus prays and how he prays or comments on prayer
- Things to pray for-
 - Pray for guidance, this is the prayer for thy will to be done in your life
 - Prayer of surrender, where you surrender your will in response to his
 - Prayer of intercession, this is where you pray for others
- Remember prayer works even if you don't always see the results. Remember to look for results in unexpected ways. In my experience my prayers are often answered in ways that I never expected.
- Make listening a regular part of your prayer- remember listening presupposes that someone is speaking which is an act of faith in the Lord.
- Remember that openness, honest and trust mark the communication of children with their father. The reason God answers prayer is because his children ask.
- When all else fails- pray.

Fasting

Fasting is so prevalent in the Bible it is hard to believe that it is virtually nonexistent in the modern church. Jesus says, "When you fast..." his statement presupposes that we will fast.

So the first thing we need to keep in our minds is that fasting's first purpose is to bring us to a place where we are better able to connect with God... often in the Bible three things are linked together... prayer, fasting and worship. They are inseparable.

Secondarily, fasting perhaps more than any of the other disciplines, also can inform of us of the things that control us. Fasting tells the body that it doesn't control you... and I can tell you from experience; the body can be very clever in convincing you that you need to eat...

Guidelines for fasting

- Start slow- Try a 24 hour fast from food only, drinking fruit juice and water.
- Refrain from caffeine during the fast.
- Try fasting once a week for several weeks. Keep a journal of how you felt and what you experienced.
- After several weeks go to a complete 24 hour fast drinking only water.
- After you have mastered that then you can consider longer fasts.
- Remember you will experience discomfort, but with training that will go away.

A good book to read is called, God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallis

Study

Paul tells us that we are transformed by the renewal of our minds. The mind is renewed by applying it to those things that will transform it. Paul also said, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is

lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. The discipline is the method that we can use to think on these things.

Jesus made unmistakably clear that the knowledge of truth will set you free, not simply the truth. Good feelings will not free us. Ecstatic experiences will not free us. Getting high on Jesus will not free us. Without a knowledge of Jesus (the truth) we will not be free.

What we study will form the habits that we live by. Think about how much time you spend thinking about work... it becomes the habit which we live by, instead of it being a means by which we serve the Lord.

Guidelines for study

- There are four steps to study
 - Repetition- You have to go over the same subject over and over again to really get it
 - Concentration- We have to concentrate on what is being studied, this means that you may have to turn off the TV while your studying
 - Comprehension- It's not enough to repeat and concentrate, you have to comprehend what you're studying. To do this may have to have help from commentaries or study guides or a mentor/teacher.
 - Reflection- Reflection on what you've learned cements into your mind and allows to recall it and apply to it various situations
- You have to read in order to study- Reading involves three steps
 - Understanding- you have to understand what the author is saying
 - Interpreting- What does the author mean
 - Evaluating- Is the author right
- What should we study-
 - First and foremost the Bible- begin with a small book. Read it through, get the big picture
 - Other classics that have stood the test of time- C.S. Lewis is a good example.
 - Newer authors like Rob Bell and Dan Kimball are examples
- Join a group study- we learn better in community

Guidelines for Simplicity*

- Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.
- Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you. Learn the difference between need and addiction. How can you discern an addiction? Watch for undisciplined compulsions.
- Develop a habit of giving things away.
- Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry. Most "time saving" gadgets don't really save you time. Most gadgets are built to break or wear out and so complicate our lives rather than enhance them.
- Learn to enjoy things without owning them. Owning things is an obsession in our culture. Many things in life can be enjoyed without possessing them. Share things. Enjoy the beach without feeling you have to buy a piece of it. Enjoy public parks, city walks, talking.

- Develop a deeper appreciation for the creation. Get close to the earth. Walk. Listen to birds. Enjoy the texture of grass and leaves. Smell flowers. Marvel at colors around you. Rediscover, "Ps 24:1 – the earth is the Lords' and everything in it."
- Have a healthy skepticism at all "buy now, pay later" schemes.
- Obey Jesus' instruction about plain, honest speech. "Let your yes be yes, and your no be no." Matt. 5:37.
- Reject anything that leads to the oppression of others.
- Avoid the things that distract you from seeking first the kingdom of God.

The Acts of Submission*

1. Submission to the Triune God. At the beginning of the day we wait, in the words of the hymn writer, "yielded and still" before Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The first word of our day form the prayer of Thomas a Kempis, "As thou wilt; what thou wilt; when thou wilt." We yield our body, mind, and spirit for his purposes. Likewise, the day is lived in deeds of submission interspersed with constant outpourings of inward surrender. As the first words of the morning are of submission, so are the last words of the night. We surrender our body, mind, and spirit into the hands of God to do with us as he pleases through the long darkness.
2. Submission to the Scripture. As we submit ourselves to the Word of God living (Jesus), so we submit ourselves to the Word of God written (Scripture). We yield ourselves first to hear the Word, second to receive the Word, and third to obey the Word. We look to the Spirit who inspired the Scriptures to interpret and apply them to our condition; the word of Scripture, animated by the Holy Spirit, lives with us throughout the day.
3. Submission to our family. The dictum for the household should be "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil 2:4). Freely and graciously the members of the family make allowances for each other. The primary deed of submission is a commitment to listen to the other family members. Its corollary is willingness to share, which is itself a work of submission.
4. Submission to our neighbors and those we meet in the course of our daily lives. The life of simple goodness is lived before them. If they are in need, we help them. We perform small acts of kindness and ordinary neighborliness: sharing our food, babysitting their children, mowing their lawn, visiting over important and unimportant matters, sharing our tools. No task is too small, too trifling, for each one is an opportunity to live in submission.
5. Submission to the believing community, the body of Christ. If there are jobs to be done and tasks to be accomplished, we look at them closely to see if they are God's invitation to the cross-life. We cannot do everything, but we can do some things. Sometimes these are matters of an organizational nature, but most frequently they are spontaneous opportunities for little tasks of service. At times calls to serve the Church universal may come, and if the ministry is confirmed in our hearts, we can submit to it with assurance and reverence.
6. Submission to the broken and despised. In every culture there are the "widows and orphans"; that is, the helpless, the undefended (James 1:27). Our first responsibility is to be

among them. Like St. Francis in the thirteenth century and Kagawa in the twentieth, we must discover ways to identify genuinely with the downtrodden, the rejected. There we must live the cross-life.

7. Submission to the world. We live in an interdependent, international community. We cannot live in isolation. Our environmental responsibility, or the lack of it, affects not only the people around the world but generations yet to be born. Starving peoples affect us. Our act of submission is a determination to live as a responsible member of an increasingly irresponsible world.

