

Spiritual disciplines

Spiritual Disciplines

What are the Disciplines

Spiritual disciplines are

- *the means by which we can know and experience God so that we can become more like Him*
- *personal and interpersonal practices (habits or activities – not attitudes or character qualities) which promote spiritual growth among believers*
- *derive from the gospel and take us deeper into an understanding of the gospel.*
- **Cautions:**
 - *Although spiritual disciplines are the means to godliness that does not mean that we are godly just because we practice them. The great error of the Pharisees was that they felt by merely doing these things they were godly.*
 - *Opportunities for growth – not meant to be a burden.*
 - *Rest in power of the Spirit. The discipline makes our heart right for the Spirit to work in and transform us*

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The Purpose of Discipline

Godliness –

1 Timothy 4:7, "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness"

2 Timothy 3:16–17, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work,"

Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

Transformation - *"The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us . . . The inner righteousness we seek is not something that is poured on our heads. God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where he can bless us. In this regard it would be proper to speak of 'the path of disciplined grace.' It is 'grace' because it is free; it is 'disciplined' because there is something for us to do." - Richard J. Foster - Celebration of Discipline:*

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The Purpose of Discipline

Equip ourselves for crisis - *“Spiritual discipline, then, is developing soul reflexes so that we know how to live. We discipline ourselves to develop soul memory in normal times so that we’ll be equipped for the times of high demand or deep crisis.” — Douglas Rumford*

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The Process of Discipline

1 Peter 2:2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation

Maturity requires incremental growth, accumulation of experience

Allowing intentional choices to become habits and the habits to shape our character

Allowing different disciplines to strengthen each other

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The Fruits of the Disciplines

Matt 12:33 “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit.”

Form our dependence on the Holy Spirit

Form our character/integrity

Form our choices

Form our virtues

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Individual Goals of each Discipline

Simplicity

Gain integrity of spirit, reduce distractions, reduce need / temptation for things so that we can better serve God

Gratitude

Develop ability to recognize and appreciate God's provision

Fasting

Enter into grief and repentance, strengthen our will, seek guidance

Lament

Identifying more closely with those who suffer and the God who hears their cry.

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The Goals of the Disciplines

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|--------------------------|--|
| Generosity | Increase awareness of and dependence on God's provision, learning to love sacrificially and prioritize the Kingdom above worldly possessions, place needs of others above the self |
| Bible disciplines | Think on/analyze the things of God, gain wisdom. Internalize God's word so that it becomes part of your thinking |
| Prayer | PRAYER: Communicate with and align our will with God, participate in His works, claim power over evil, receive His peace, answered prayer is a witness to yourself and others. |

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The Goals of the Disciplines

Worship	Surrender to him, move focus from ourselves to Him and who He is and what He has done, sacrifice of our feelings (ourselves), celebrate in face of our pain and loss, learn humility and meekness
Service	Stewardship of abilities, spiritual gifts, serve as part of the whole body of God
Submission	Humbly accepting authority of others without losing self-worth
Rest	Rest from our labors, increase dependence on God
Distress	Release control to God

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Simplicity/Stewardship

Finding our center – reduce possessions/schedule so that we can focus on our purpose

Setting our priorities – with our purpose clarified, define our priorities

Stewarding our resources – with our priorities defined and our limited resources acknowledged we can figure out how to manage our resources

- *2 Corinthians 1:12 For our boast is this, the testimony of our conscience, that we behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God, and supremely so toward you.*
- *Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”*
- *1 Timothy 6:6-8 Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.*

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Gratitude

Affirming good things received – learn to be grateful despite our circumstances

Looking for things to be grateful for – develop awareness of the very ordinary things we can be grateful for, and not comparing ourselves to others

Exercise fasting to enhance feelings of gratitude – use fasting as a means to develop our gratitude

- *1 Thessalonians 5:18 Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*
- *Psalms 118:24 This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*
- *Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

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Fasting

Setting your intention – strengthen ourselves, seek guidance, process grief, repentance, rededication, etc.

Adjusting our appetites - learning to wait on/rest in God, put other needs aside

Tips for practicing the discipline of fasting – be sensitive to our needs and to Holy Spirit, don't sideline spiritual discipline with physical goals (weight loss, etc.)

Isaiah 58:6-7 Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

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Lament

Causes for lament – recognize struggles of life and cry out for justice, embrace the suffering other

Rest - learn to slow down and become aware of emotion and pain

Remember - remember pain and injustice that affect us and others

Repentance – acknowledge the part we have played in the world's injustice

Psalm 10:1-4 Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble? In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised. For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curses and renounces the Lord. In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, "There is no God."

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Generosity

Setting our hearts to recognize God's grace

*If we have entered the discipline of simplicity to order our lives and stewardship,
and if we have entered the discipline of gratitude to order our attitudes,
and if we have entered the discipline of fasting to order our needs
and if we have entered the discipline of lament to order our desires
then we are in a place enter into the discipline of generosity.*

Setting our heart to recognize the resources God has given – recognize our stewardship of the time, talents, etc. that God has given

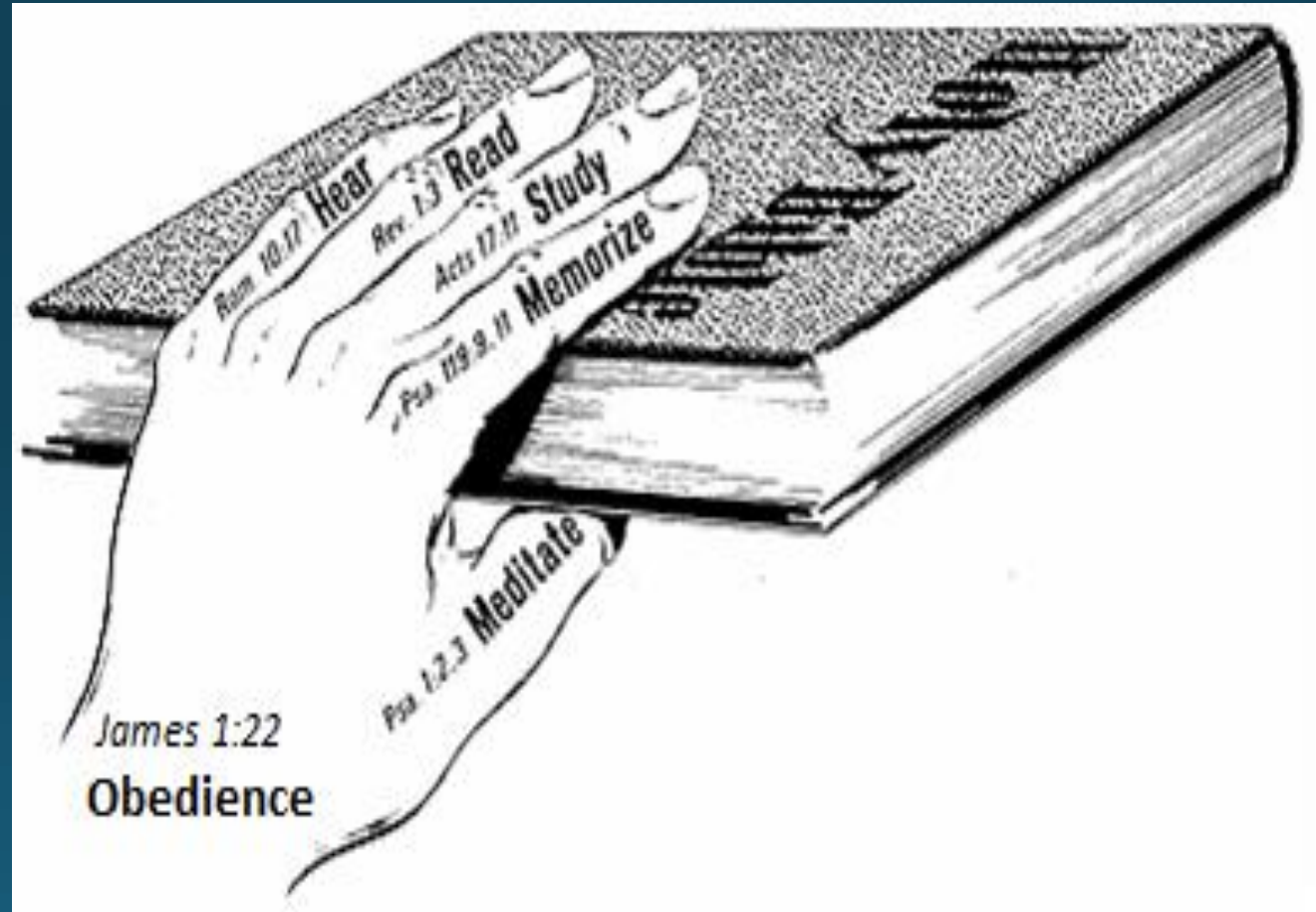
Acknowledge our security is from God – remove trust from our possessions, set our trust in God

Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it;"

Proverbs 11:24-25 One gives freely, yet another grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.

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Bible Disciplines: The List



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Bible Disciplines: Hearing the Word

Listening with patience – active listening, ask questions restraining our answers

Be in the moment – focus on the person speaking

Listen to the end – wait for the important thoughts

Bring honest concerns and questions – be honest about our feelings and concerns

Romans 10:17 *"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."*

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Bible Disciplines: Reading the Word

Read for breadth – devotionals, read through the Bible

Read consistently – breadth requires continual reading

Read without agenda – come with questions, not answers you want to justify

Read prepared to listen – give time to reflect and listen to God's voice

Revelations 1:3 "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near."

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Bible Disciplines: Studying the Word

The purpose - not to know “the Bible” but to know the God of the Bible

Bible study by chapter – read book to understand context of chapter, outline, look for details

Bible study by paragraph – determine main thought, rewrite the text, outline

Bible study by verses - identify verbs, people, ideas

Bible study by books- inductive vs synthetic method

Acts 17:11 "Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."

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Bible Disciplines: Studying the Word

Bible study by words – trace use of word in chapter or book, concordance, word study

Bible study by topics – more complex than word study, concordance, topical outlines

Bible study through biography – find where person is mentioned in text and in historical text

Bible study through journaling – keep a journal as you study

Bible study through scripture writing – write out scripture, possibly using creative means that help memorize and digest scripture



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Bible Disciplines: Memorizing the Word

Tips for memorizing

Turn verse into prayer

Memorize with a partner

Write out the verses

Say verses out loud

Set verse to music

Use physical motions

Psalm 119: 9,11 “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”

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Bible Disciplines: Meditating on the Word

Muttering the Word – speak, ponder imagine, mourn, muse, complain

Daily habit – select a scripture portion to meditate on throughout the day

Apply imagination – Envision how the scripture can be experienced in you life

Forming our character – allowing scripture to not only shape our thinking and our actions. Pray, personalize, practice

Psalm 1:2,3 "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on His law, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither ... Whatever he does prospers."

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Bible Disciplines: Obedience to Word

Be ready for every good work – act according to prompting of scripture

4 Ps application – problem, passage, plan, progress

Hearing/Obeying – “shema” (Hebrew) implies both hearing and obeying

James 1:22 *“Do not merely listen to the Word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*

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Prayer

Lectio Divina

Lectio (read)

Meditatio (meditate)

Oratio (pray)

Contemplatio (contemplation)

Collatio (forming community)

Philippians 4:6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 Pray without ceasing,

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

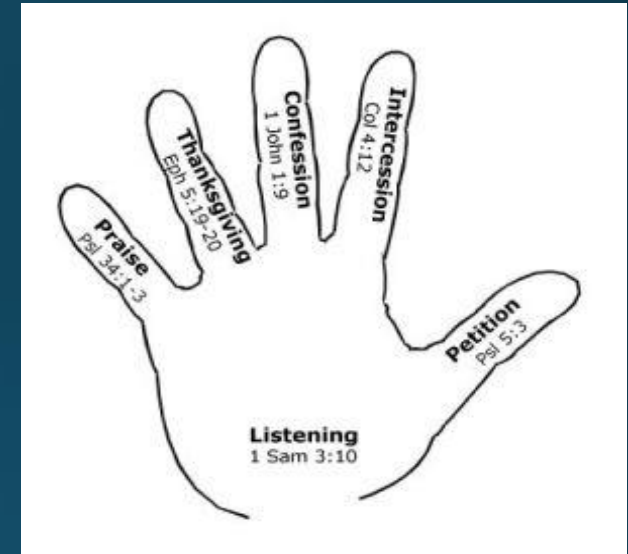
Matthew 6:6-7 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

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Prayer

Prayer tips

- try different locations, times, sitting, walking
- lighting a candle
- journaling
- pray scripture
- formal pre-written prayers



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Worship / Celebration

Responding to God –

giving God the glory for who He is and what He has done not just on Sunday, not just the music

responding with our voice and our body, in a sacrifice of praise, purity, humility, surrender, confession, thanksgiving

Seven steps to worship

Practice the presence of God daily, try different experiences of worship, find ways to prepare for worship, have a willingness to be gathered in the power of the Lord, cultivate a holy dependency, absorb distractions with gratitude, learn to offer a sacrifice of worship
(Richard Foster, Celebration of discipline)

Romans 12:1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

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Service

Building the community – we do not belong to ourselves, but to Christ and His body

Changing diapers – we can offer service according to our gifts, but we may serve where we are needed

Different services: hiddenness, small things, guarding reputations of others, be served, common courtesy, hospitality, listening, bear each others' burdens

I Corinthians 12:7 *"To EACH ONE is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good."*

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Submission

Mutual accountability – we are responsible to build each other up, serve each other

Priority of listening – discern one another's needs, be open to direction

Guarding against abuse – our fallen nature makes us susceptible to “lording it over” another and dismissing our own accountability

1 Peter 5:6-7 – “So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.” (NLT)

Hebrews 13:17 – “Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.” (NLT)

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Resting / Sabbath

We work to live – we are designed to be able to work but not “for work.” We are designed to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

We rest to remember - rest and sleep remind us of our limitations. While we rest we can remember our dependence on God and the rhythms of life that He intended for us.

Mark 2:27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Hebrews 4:1, 9 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it ... There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;

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Distress

Stop ruling the world – the world is under God's control, not ours

Start taking the test – take time to learn about ourselves, to grow in our faith, examine our priorities

Seek his face – take time to commune with God, feel the reality of His love

Psalm 11:3-5,7 if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"The Lord is in his holy temple; the Lord's throne is in heaven; his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man. The Lord tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence ... For the Lord is righteous; he loves righteous deeds; the upright shall behold his face.