



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

WILLOW CREEK BAPTIST
CHURCH

Introduction to Spiritual Disciplines

Taken in part from Richard Foster's "Celebration of Discipline", Renovare.org, and Dallas Willard's "The Spirit of the Disciplines"

What are Spiritual Disciplines?

Biblical and tangible practices by which we abide in Christ and undergird our obedience and service, all of which help accomplish our mission to be like Christ and draw others to Christ.

"For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." – Romans 8:29

Service

Scripture Reference

Ruth 2:11; Matt. 20:26-28; Mark 9:35; 10:45; John 13:4-5

What is it?

It is the "loving, thoughtful, active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world, through which we experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves" (Renovare.org). Service can be accomplished in many shapes and forms through the tangible gifts of our time, resources, and most of all – ourselves. It is important to note that Christ-like service is never self-seeking, but gives even when nothing is given back or the recipient is un-grateful. In this way, our actions are separated from worldly service as we tangibly show the power of God's grace (unmerited favour) through the gospel of the Son.

"Anyone who wants to be the first must be the very last, and the servant of all" - Mark 9:35

Thoughts and Reflection

Confession

Scripture Reference

2 Cor. 5:20-21; Jam. 5:16; 1 John 1:9

What is it?

It is the practice of vulnerably revealing the sins and sorrows of the past in order to more fully enter into the grace and mercy of God and experience profound forgiveness, healing, and freedom. While confession can happen in private it finds its greatest impact within community.

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you might be healed” – James 5:16

Thoughts and Reflection

Biblical Meditation

Scripture Reference

Psalm 119; John 5:39; John 17:2-3

What is it?

*It is a way of reflecting on scripture that reveals the Father and Son through the Holy Spirit in a **personal/relational** way! Richard Foster breaks down the biblical definition of meditation as, “listening to God’s word, reflecting on God’s works, rehearsing God’s deeds, ruminating on God’s law, and more” (p. 19).*

“I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways” – Psalm 119:15

Thoughts and Reflection

Biblical Study

Scripture Reference

2 Tim. 2:15

What is it?

*It is a way of reflecting on scripture that reveals the Father and Son through the Holy Spirit in a more **analytical** way! Study and meditation are “siblings” in that they are closely related to the same purpose of finding the Living Word through the written word. Richard Foster gives a helpful understanding of their relationship, “Meditation is devotional; study is analytical. Meditation will relish a word; study will explicate it” (p. 81).*

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth”
2 Timothy 2:15*

Thoughts and Reflection

Community

Scripture Reference

Ps. 133:1; Matt. 18:20; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 12; Heb. 10:25

What is it?

It is the practice of regularly gathering and engaging with other disciples to encourage one another in the common practices of celebration, growth, and service. Notice the complementary relationship with solitude, realizing our desperate need to both live in companionship with others, yet not allowing them to take the place of companionship or lordship with God.

*“How good and pleasant it is when
God’s people live together in unity!” –
Psalm 133:1*

Thoughts and Reflection

Celebration

Scripture Reference

Ex. 15:20; Jud. 5; 2 Sam. 6:12-16; Deut. 14; John 2; Rev. 4:11

What is it?

It is the practice of dwelling on and expressing “the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God through thought and the use of words, rituals, and symbols” (Willard, p. 177). Celebration and worship cannot be separated. Our call to worship God is simply to see him as worthy or to assign worth to him. The discipline of celebration addresses the tangible ways in which we do this, whether individually or corporately.

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power”

Revelation 4:11

Thoughts and Reflection

Submission

Scripture Reference

Luke 9:23; 1 Peter 2:18; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3-4; Isaiah 64:8

What is it?

It is the practice of laying down the burden of protecting our will or rights in favour of the will or rights of others and ultimately God. In this self-initiated subordination...to actually find freedom. (Paul speaks of this as choosing “slavery” – 1 Cor. 9:19; Eph. 6:6)

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me” – Luke 9:23

Thoughts and Reflection

Solitude

Scripture Reference

Matt. 4:1-11; Matt. 14:13; Matt. 23; Luke 6:12

What is it?

It is the practice of intentionally avoiding interaction with other human beings for the purpose of overcoming the common human fear of being alone as we learn what it means to live in companionship with God. Notice the opposite, yet complimentary nature of this discipline with the discipline of community.

“When Jesus heard what had happened, He withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place” – Matthew 14:13

Thoughts and Reflection

Chastity

Scripture Reference

Matt. 5:27; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 1 Cor. 7:5

What is it?

It is the practice of “purposefully turning away from dwelling upon or engaging in the sexual dimension of our relationship to others — even our husband or wife — and thus learning how not to be governed by this powerful aspect of our life” (Willard – Renovare.org). Much like simplicity, the goal here is to learn to deny our fallen/sinful desire for sexual fulfillment outside God’s design.

“For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life” – 1 Thessalonians 4:7

Thoughts and Reflection

Prayer

Scripture Reference

John 14:13-14; John 15:16; John 16:24; 1 Thess. 5:17

What is it?

It is the practice of living in a constant posture of intimate communication with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Prayer is one of the most powerful avenues God uses to transform us into the image of the Son. It can be done out loud or within one's thoughts. It is most effective when connected with other disciplines and encompasses many forms. The ultimate emphasis of this discipline is on listening for Christ's voice in each moment and circumstance of life.

“Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete” – John 16:24

Thoughts and Reflection

Silence

Scripture Reference

Ps. 23:2; Ps. 131:2; Ps. 46:10; Is. 30:15; Mark 6:31

What is it?

It is the practice of silencing any “noise” (whether radio, screens, people's words, etc.) that we experience in our daily lives, so that we might better hear the voice of the Lord. While this may be manifested in absence of speech, it has more to do with listening. Silence and solitude may also be seen as “siblings” in that they have typically been practiced in conjunction with one another.

“He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters” – Psalm 23:2

Thoughts and Reflection

Fasting

Scripture Reference

Ps. 35:13; Matt. 4:4; Matt. 6:16-18; Mark 9:29; John 4:32,34

What is it?

It is the practice of abstaining from food (possibly drink) for the primary purpose of learning to be less dependent on our bodies and more dependent on the words that proceed from the mouth of the Lord. Dallas Willard says, "Fasting unto our Lord is therefore feasting-feasting on him and on doing his will" (pg166). The goal here is to deny our basic human need of food for spiritual enrichment, to hear from the Lord, and to serve the Lord.

*"It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" –
Matthew 4:4*

Thoughts and Reflection

Simplicity

Scripture Reference

Matt. 6

What is it?

It is an outward lifestyle reflected in the inner understanding of Jesus' words in Matthew 6:33 to "seek first the Kingdom of God". More so, it is making practical decisions with our time and resources that are more concerned with God's Kingdom than our own. It is crucial that this comes from Christ's direction (abiding) to each individual lest it become a legalistic list void of grace. The goal here is to deny our fallen/sinful proclivity to worry about earthly "stuff" and/or our desire for status, glamour, or luxury.

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" – Matthew 6:33

Thoughts and Reflection
