



BUILD CHARACTER

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DEFINED

Practices rhythms that help you better know, love, trust and obey God, to deepen your intimacy with Him and more fully live from your identity in Christ.

"The orientation of your heart happens from the bottom up, through the formation of our habits of desire. Learning to love (God) takes practice."
- James K.A. Smith

SPIRITUAL OUTCOME DESCRIBED

Whether we are new in our faith journey or have been walking with Christ for decades, the possibility for growth and a deeper relationship with Christ is available for all of us. The Spiritual disciplines are various intentional practices that help us continue to grow in dynamic ways in our intimacy with Christ, our awareness of the Spirit's activity in our lives, and to live fully in our new, redeemed nature.

Unfortunately, the term "disciplines" may turn some of us off, cause anxiety for some or lead others into performance mode. But, what if we looked at these practices another way? What if we viewed them as spiritual opportunities that could have the most life-changing effect- put us in the presence of God? Pausing to look at the spiritual practices and rhythms you have in place and being open to trying new ones can not only help you grow in awareness of God's presence, but can help you get "spiritually unstuck" during dry seasons of faith. The Spiritual disciplines also serve to re-calibrate our hearts toward what God says is *the good life* rather than what the world around us might say.

Transformation doesn't just happen to us, we must go after it. Think about dental hygiene, for instance. If we want to have good, healthy teeth, we must develop the habit of flossing and brushing our teeth regularly. Just like any good desire in life, pursuing our spiritual health takes practice, consistency, and planning. And, if we want to be spiritually healthy and fit in life, Spiritual disciplines are the gracious gifts we've been given to experience this. Jesus, when He walked the earth, embodied these practices. He needed to get away to commune with the Father and stay in step with His Spirit through prayer, Scripture, fasting, solitude, etc.

So, how is it that the Spiritual disciplines work? They are pathways for ushering us into the very presence of God. It's when we're open and available physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually through these Spiritual practices that we have the opportunity to experience God more fully, see Him at work more clearly, and daily be empowered to "put on the new self" that the Apostle Paul encourages us to do- the self, "which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col. 3:12). As we prioritize and plan for the Spiritual habits, we will experience this "renewal"- looking more and more like the One who created us and enjoying our relationship with Him in greater measure!

What practices might you put in place in the rhythm of your life to help you live fully in the abundant life that Jesus offers?

EVIDENCE OF THIS SPIRITUAL OUTCOME IN A PERSON'S LIFE

- Able to explain the purpose of various disciplines and has experienced the benefits of them.
- Has identified and implemented a holistic plan for engaging spiritual disciplines in one's current season of life.
- Is experiencing a deeper relationship with God, a greater sensitivity to the Spirit, and renewal of one's heart and mind.

GUIDANCE

Read each passage multiple times. Then write your observations about the passage and any thoughts you have from the discernment question. What do you notice in the passage, and what does this reveal about your life?

PSALM 1:1-3

Observations:

Discernment Question: If you were a tree, in your current season of life, would your leaves be vibrant and green or brittle and dry? Why?

PSALM 30:11-12

Observations:

Discernment Question: There is not only a time and place where silence refreshes the soul, but there is a time for celebration as well! When is the last time you celebrated with God and others? What big or little things in this season of your life can you take time to celebrate?

JOEL 2:12-13

Observations:

Discernment Question: Knowing that God wants all of your heart, how can fasting help your heart turn fully toward Him? Is there anything God is calling you to fast from (food, social media, TV, etc.) so that He can have more of your heart and attention?

PROVERBS 2:1-8

Observations:

Discernment Question: What things are you pursuing in your life right now? How passionate is your current pursuit of God? If it were a treasure hunt, would you likely find the treasure?

MATTHEW 6:16-18

Observations:

Discernment Question: What has been your experience fasting for spiritual reasons? Have those experiences been vital and important? Why or why not? If it's something you have not done, what keeps you from doing so? Is it just a new idea you haven't considered? Or, is it something you are aware of but resistant to?

MARK 1:35

Observations:

Discernment Question: To what extent do you have solitude in your life? What practices or habits could you engage in to create space for solitude and time alone with God?

EPHESIANS 4:17-24

Observations:

Discernment Question: How do your current practices and habits either help or hinder you in "putting off your old self"? How do they help or hinder the renewal of your mind? How do they help or hinder you from putting on "the new self"?

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

Observations:

Discernment Question: When you pray, what are your prayers like? Are they filled with gratitude and thankfulness for the little and big wins of life? Or is it tempting to just pray about the wants and worries of life? How could praying like verse 6 suggest help you have more peace as mentioned in verse 7?

1 TIMOTHY 4:7-8

Observations:

Discernment Question: Thoughtfully consider your current spiritual practices or training. How effective are they? Are you “spiritually fit” or “spiritually flabby?” Training for godliness has value for not only this life, but the life to come. What new practices or rhythms do you need to put in place to help you become more spiritually fit?

2 PETER 1:3-9

Observations:

Discernment Question: To what extent are you increasing in the qualities listed? What equips and inspires you? What inhibits and restricts you? How would implementing new spiritual practices or rhythms help you spiritually grow and mature?

NEXT STEPS

What are practical next steps you will do based on what you have discovered in this survey of Scripture about cultivating practicing Spiritual disciplines? Include insights offered from others in your Life Group that could be applied in your own life, as well.

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:2, NIV

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

1 Timothy 4:7-8, NIV

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.



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The Greek word for training used in the New Testament several times is *gumnadzo*, which is where we get the words "gymnasium" and "gymnastics" in the English language. Paul, here, is urging Timothy, his young protege, to focus his attention on exercising in godliness- becoming more and more like Jesus. Just like someone goes through a rigorous training plan in order to complete a marathon, Paul wants Timothy to train his spiritual life with the same kind of intensity. The spiritual disciplines are exercises that strengthen, train and nourish the soul. They deepen our connection with God and form our character.

For many of us, this kind of training may sound like drudgery and a chore. We like instant gratification and getting good things we don't have to work for is appealing. But, look what Paul goes on to say about training in godliness, it doesn't just have value for one area of life, but every area! Also, it doesn't just have purpose for our physical, present life, but it goes on into life eternal! This is the kind of training that is preparing us to live in the life that is to come! It is infinitely valuable!

Being like Christ, living fully in who He created you to be, doesn't happen overnight. It is a life-long process. We each have patterns, rhythms and habits from our old selves that must be unlearned, rewired and replaced in order for us to grow in godly character. This will not happen apart from the spiritual training and discipline Paul speaks of often.

The Spiritual disciplines we find in Scripture are not arbitrary, but deeply rooted in our relationship with God. Each discipline is aimed at getting us closer to Him and ridding us of the distractions that only get in the way of us hearing Him clearly and letting Him accomplish the transformation of which only He is capable. The disciplines are not a checklist of things that we must accomplish perfectly in order to be with God and become like Him. If we treat them this way, then we will miss out on the intimacy with God that awaits us. But, how do we do we avoid the checklist mentality?

First, we need to understand that *not* doing the disciplines is NOT SIN. But, practicing spiritual disciplines *is* freedom. They are the means by which we *overcome* sin patterns in our lives. For instance, if you battle impure thoughts toward others (thoughts of lust, greed, anger, pride, etc.), having the discipline of memorizing scripture with which you can replace these thoughts, rewires your mind and heart toward loving and honoring others in the way that Christ does. It forms you more into His character.

Also, it's important to remember that practicing spiritual habits and rhythms is NOT THE END IN ITSELF. God is not breathing down our necks to do them just for the sake of obedience. The disciplines are a means to an end. The END being: a deeper relationship with God and spiritual transformation and growth. Have you ever met a person whom you considered spiritually mature and close with God who did not have regular spiritual practices in their life? Exactly!

Some of us may need to hear that practicing spiritual disciplines is NOT LEGALISM. These things will only become legalistic if you view them as a way to earn salvation or favor from God. Even though the disciplines take effort on our part, that effort does not automatically equal merit. For instance, there is a big difference between fasting to get closer to God and fasting in order to get something *from* God. The motive behind the discipline will determine whether you're resorting to legalism or not.

So, now is the time to try some on- not all of them, but if you're new to this, start with one or two. The spiritual disciplines we see exhibited for us in scripture are not meant to be performed all at once, all the time. We don't see Jesus spending all His time in solitude or fasting every day. They are each tailored to serve us through different seasons of need and growth. To determine which one/s are right for the season you're in, read through the list below while asking the Spirit to reveal what your soul most needs right now. What stands out to you or tugs at your heart as you read through the list? What can you imagine yourself doing as you connect with God?

Take some time to read the descriptions of those that stand out to you. Once you have done that, see the instructions below about how to apply what you've read.

Descriptions adapted from www.soulrevolution.net/spiritual-practices

Accountability

Overview of the Practice of Accountability

The spiritual practice of Accountability is being “answerable” to someone else who can help you stay on target. It isn't having someone randomly poking into your private affairs, but having someone to intentionally help you stay focused in your spiritual goals and endeavors. And, it isn't having “big brother” looking over your shoulder to see if you're being a good little boy or girl. It's knowing that there's someone out there who cares about your spiritual growth and wants to help you stay connected to Christ. No matter what other spiritual practices are part of your life, you could benefit from someone holding you accountable to keep them going (or add new ones!).

What Scripture Says:

Galatians 6:1-2

Hebrews 10:23-25

Incorporate this practice into your life

Accountability often happens best between two or more people who are really transparent with each other and who really care about each other. That's the traditional way accountability relationships happen — a phone call or a face-to-face meeting to talk about general areas, or perhaps to check in on one specific area of temptation. Spiritual Running Partners are an example of an accountability relationship (though Running Partners are also so much more).

Recently, software tools, online forums, and interactive websites have made that sort of authentic accountability available more readily and more specifically. Sites like those listed here offer things like daily email reminders, internet filtering, and online accountability partners.

At the core, though, accountability is all about having some person you can be real with, who is committed to keeping you honest, on-track, and focused, and who's also committed to praying for you, encouraging you, and even speaking hard words (in love) when needed.

A Running Partner is much more than just someone who keeps you accountable — they are also someone who encourages you, prays for you, and supports you as you grow spiritually.

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing?

■ **Accountability about Spiritual Disciplines:** Running Partners

As you're starting to incorporate a new spiritual practice into your life, it may be helpful to ask someone else to hold you accountable to keep it up. Talk to your Spiritual Running Partner or another trusted friend and give them permission to ask “hey, how's it going with...?” (you might set up a regular meeting or phone call every

week) And, give yourself permission to answer honestly, whether it's going well or not!

- **Accountability for Pornography or Lust:** X3church.com

XXXchurch (or x3church — just in case you have a block on websites with xxx in the title) is a tool for education, accountability, and recovery concerning pornography. There are resources for men & women, teens & adults, offering software-based accountability, discussion forums, and other tools to help people combat pornography addictions. (includes helps for parents, too)

Access resource:x3church.com

- **Accountability about habits and attitudes:** Running Partners

As you're seeking to maintain honesty or integrity, or seeking to break bad habits, a Running Partner can be a vital way of keeping you accountable. Talk to your Running Partner and incorporate authentic conversations about these areas into your discussion.

- **Accountability for Addictions:** Setting Captives Free

Resources and accountability tools relating to sexual purity, food issues, gambling, and substance abuse. Includes some resources for teens & children, too.

Access resource:settingcaptivesfree.com

Confession

Overview of the Practice of Confession

The practice of confession is intentionally admitting sin to both God and with trusted community. This allows you to humbly ask for and receive prayer, support, encouragement, and accountability in areas of struggle as well as celebration when the Holy Spirit moves in you to help you grow and overcome.

In the classic book, “The Celebration of Discipline,” author Richard Foster describes confession as being not just “psychologically therapeutic. But it is so much more. It involves an objective change in our relationship with God and a subjective change in us. It is a means of healing and transforming the inner spirit.” This healing and transformation is available to us because of Jesus Christ. No matter how much guilt we feel or how big our sins may seem, if we are followers of Christ, we have forgiveness.

Confession is a spiritual practice that can happen alone between you & God, or in community with other followers 1 Timothy 2:5 and James 5:16 show these different sides of confession. Both are important spiritual practices. When confession happens privately, we are, in effect, coming before God and owning up to what’s inside us and accepting the forgiveness we have in Christ. When confession happens corporately, we confess sins to another Christ-follower and that person is there in the flesh to respond to us in Christ’s name.

Whether you practice this spiritual discipline alone or with someone else, confession allows us release from not only the guilt of sin, but also an opportunity to turn from it. We are freed from the guilt of our sin by God’s grace (freely given). We are given an opportunity to repent and turn in a different direction. When we own up to our deepest weaknesses and failings, and when we present the most transparent view of ourselves to God or others through confession, we open ourselves up to deeper, more authentic relationships with God and others.

Confession is a spiritual practice you can incorporate on a daily basis (or maybe even hourly...). Keeping short accounts with God is a good practice to get into. It’s the sins that we try to hide that have the most power over us. Confession releases us from not only the guilt of those sins, but also allows us to escape the power of hidden sin.

What Scripture says

- [James 5:16](#)
- [1 Timothy 2:5-6](#)
- [Psalm 51](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

You can start this spiritual practice by just opening up to God and honestly telling Him what’s up. See the Repentance and Confession Outcome for more information on how to do this.

How does this practice relate to what I’m facing?

- Confessing it all:

Confession is a spiritual practice that relates to pretty much everything you’re facing. If it’s stress, anger, conflict, discontentment, despair, doubt, guilt, laziness, or addictions — you can confess it. If it’s feeling condemned, if it’s feeling lost — you can talk to God about it honestly.

Celebration

Overview of the Practice of Celebration

The discipline of celebration is all' about Joy! The Christian life ought to be about celebration — laughing together, smiling with others, and celebrating all God has done and continues to do. Celebration is a discipline we all need to incorporate into our lives — not just on special occasions but day-to-day. Celebration reminds us of what has happened, gives us reason to praise God, and connects us with the fullness of life with have through Christ.

What Scripture says

- [Psalm 145:6-8](#)
- [Isaiah 63:7](#)
- [Romans 11:36](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

In “The Spirit of the Disciplines,” Dallas Willard writes, “We engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our life, our world, in conjunction with our faith and confidence in God’s greatness, beauty, and goodness. We concentrate on our life and world as God’s work and as God’s gift to us.” Try engaging in celebration in that way — consider what you’re doing as God’s work, and consider everything around you as God’s gift.

We can practice the discipline of celebration even when we’re going through hard times, grieving, suffering loss, or facing trials. At times like that, we can remember what Jesus told his disciples about tough times — “In this world you will have troubles, but rejoice, I have overcome the world.”

How does this practice relate to what I’m facing?

- Celebration when feeling despair or failure:
Thinking about what is pure, noble...

Philippians 4:8 says “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” When you’re full of despair or feelings of failure, stop for a moment think of 3 things that are good, and celebrate them. Make this a habit each morning and see how it impacts your life.

Fasting

Overview of the Practice of Fasting

The spiritual practice of fasting is intentionally abstaining from food or drink for a period of time in order to deepen your hunger for God, your dependence upon Him, and to silence any earthly cravings that may have taken control where God wants to reside. If fasting from food is not an option for you, it can include abstaining from technology or other activities for a specific period of time in order to provide space to meet God in prayer.

What Scripture says

- [Matthew 6:16-18](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

Fasting from food can be an “absolute fast” or a “partial fast.” Absolute fast – abstaining from both food and water – probably isn’t the place to start. In Scripture, this type of fasting happens in emergencies or as desperate measures, and it isn’t something to enter into lightly – as the body can’t survive more than a few days without water. A partial fast, on the other hand, restricts the diet but doesn’t entirely stop it. You might abstain from all food, but continue to drink water or fruit juice. Or, you might keep up a very simple diet, abstaining from delicacies, alcohol, treats, etc. You could also apply the principles of fasting to abstaining from watching TV or doing some other activity.

The duration and frequency of fasting also varies. You might fast regularly – for a day each week or a day each month. There aren’t any Biblical commandments that require regular fasting – we all have freedom and opportunity to engage in fasting as God calls us. However you go about fasting, the purpose is focusing on God. Fasting reveals what controls us, and helps us uncover our real selves before God. Fasting reminds us of how God provides and sustains us. In that sense, when we fast we aren’t as much going without food as seeking nourishment from the word of God. Fasting also helps us put things in perspective and humble ourselves before God.

In your first fast, begin with a partial fast of 24 hours (this means skipping two meals – if you wake up and go without breakfast, lunch, and dinner before having breakfast the next day, you are fasting about 36 hours, which is often too much for beginners). Make this a partial fast – keep drinking water and fruit juice. As you fast, monitor your inner attitude – you keep going with your daily routine, but inside see how you’re filled with the things of God. After trying a 24-hour partial fast once a week for several weeks, try a day where you only drink water and not juice. This may be harder, but remind your stomach that you’re the master! As you continue to participate in the spiritual practice of fasting, seek God about what he’d have you do for a longer or different fast.

Whatever form of fasting you choose, keep Jesus’ instruction about not calling attention to it. Only tell those you have to tell – this helps keep focus off you. Remember, this spiritual practice should serve to help you stay connected to God, not serve to impress others.

How does this practice relate to what I’m facing?

Fasting when making a decision: Ezra 8:21,23

Ezra 8:21,23 is just one example of someone who fasted when seeking to hear from God about an important matter. You might use the spiritual practice of fasting to focus on hearing from God and seeking His wisdom about a decision.

Journaling

Overview of the Practice of Journaling

Journaling is a fairly simple spiritual practice to begin. It's almost as simple as getting a notebook and pen and just writing! Do it with a goal of making space for God in your daily life and it can be a life-giving experience. Your journal entries might vary, but here are some general ideas: make a list of what you're thankful for today, write out prayers and answers, write a letter to God, write honestly about all the thoughts swimming in your mind, or journal thoughts that go with the part of the Bible you're reading. Whatever you choose, use the journal not just as a way to vent anger or summarize what you did today, but as a way of connecting with God.

Incorporate this practice into your life

When you keep a journal as a spiritual practice, it can turn into a record of how God has led you. As you look through old journals, you can remember happy times and dark times and see how God was with you through all of them. You can write things and remember them later. In the Old Testament, you" occasionally find narratives about the people gathering stones and leaving them someplace in particular. Generations later, people could walk by those stones and know that God had done something big. Joshua chapter 4 has one such story. Read it as you start journaling and think about how your journal can be your own version of those standing stones.

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing?

■ Journaling – being honest with yourself and God:

The spiritual practice of journaling can help you grow in being honest with yourself and God. When journaling, you can be totally honest in ways that you often avoid otherwise.

■ Journaling about worries:

When you're burdened by worries, journaling may be an appropriate spiritual practice. Write a prayer letter to God, telling Him what you're worried or anxious about. Use this as a way of doing what 1 Peter 5:7 instructs, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you."

■ Journaling about anger:

The spiritual practice of journaling can also help you reconnect with God when feeling anger. When your temper flares (especially when angry with God), you often need a release — and sometimes journaling about your feelings can help. Try journaling as writing a letter to God and expressing just what you're frustrated about. Seek to use the letter writing exercise not just to vent anger, but seek God's truth about the situation.

■ Journaling when feeling unloved:

Make a list of everything that reminds you of the unconditional love of God – things like the change in seasons, birthday parties, unexpected letters from friends, beautiful sunsets, etc. Keep the list somewhere special and refer to it when you're feeling despair again.

■ Journaling about doubt:

Sometimes, it's hard to talk about doubts. Yet, your mind is spinning with them. The spiritual practice of journaling may be a valuable one at those times. In your journal, be honest with yourself and God about your doubts — about faith, life, whatever. Write down the doubts you're having and use the exercise to talk to God about them.

Meditation

Overview of the Practice of Meditation

The Spiritual practice of meditation is different from what you may be familiar with through popular culture. Rather than emptying yourself, Christian meditation is about filling yourself with the things of God — His word, His faithfulness, His love, etc. Meditation in this way opens us to see and hear God more clearly and to focus more on His ways.

What Scripture says

- [Psalm 19:14](#)
- [Joshua 1:8](#)
- [Psalm 1](#)
- [Psalm 48:9](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

Biblical meditation is about filling your mind with God and His truth. When engaging in the spiritual practice of meditation, you don't have to start expecting to concentrate on God's Word for hours at a time. Start small — maybe just a couple of minutes meditating on a simple Bible verse. As you start, it might help to deliberately remind yourself that you're doing this to focus on what God wants you to hear. If your mind wanders re-focus.

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing?

- **Meditation when feeling weakness:**Philippians 4:13

Meditate on Philippians 4:13 the next time you are feeling weakness. "I can do all things through Him who gives me strength." (that's also an easy verse to memorize, so you can refer to it at any time)

- **Meditation when feeling tempted:**Romans 6:11

Meditate on Rom as 6:11, "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus."

- **Meditation regarding purpose:**Body of Christ

Paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 12:27, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it," meditate on your purpose in God's family by considering this phrase: "I am part of the Body of Christ."

- **Meditation concerning stress:**Psalm 31:14

Psalm 31:14 and Psalm 25:2 are both short verses that you could use for scripture meditation practices. Consider memorizing one of these verses and having it on hand to ponder when you are feeling stressed out. Eastern meditation practices often say that meditation itself can reduce stress. Scriptural meditation can too, but is more that way when you are meditating on how God provides for you, cares for you, loves you deeply, and is someone you can trust.

Prayer

Overview of the Practice of Prayer

Prayer is conversing and communicating with God. It involves both speaking and listening. Prayer is very powerful when partnered with other spiritual disciplines, especially solitude, silence, and Scripture.

Incorporate this practice into your life

Some people benefit from a method of organizing their prayers. The acronym ACTS may help in that case. A is for Adoration — Worshiping God as you pray. C is for Confession — talking to God about what's really inside you. T is Thanksgiving — giving Thanks to God for what He's done. Finally, S is for Supplication — a big word that basically means coming to God with our requests or needs. There are many other ways to think about prayer, but this one may help you focus more on your prayers.

If your church has a prayer team, join them and pray with and for others.

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing?

Prayer At all Times: Prayer is a spiritual practice that really does apply to whatever situation you're facing. Make it a regular part of our routine, to check in with God at all times and talk to Him about what's happening in your life at that moment. Keep up a dialog with God about how He'd have you respond to a situation.

For a more in-depth look at the spiritual discipline of prayer, refer to the Intercession Outcome.

Simplicity / Frugality

Overview of the Practice of Simplicity / Frugality

Most of us, no matter the size of our bank account, or the size of the structure in which we live, would probably have to admit that we are surrounded by “stuff.” This isn’t just an internal situation, either – our hearts are filled with love of “stuff” and our minds often focus on a desire for more “stuff.” The spiritual practices of simplicity and frugality are deliberate actions we can take to move away from this obsession with “stuff” and focus on following God.

Practicing the discipline of simplicity or frugality seems contrary to our modern American tendencies. Maybe that’s the point. Rather than spending time thinking about when we’ll get a new car, maybe we can think about how God provides all of it, and the point of life really isn’t to accumulate more and more “stuff.” Simplicity is freedom from the demands of our outward life-style.

What Scripture says

- [Matthew 16:24-25](#)
- [Matthew 6:28-32](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

You might start thinking of simplicity by looking out your window to a bird’s nest. Ponder how simple their lives are – simple shelters and bland food – yet how vibrant and full of life they are. What can you learn from that observation?

As you start to practice simplicity, you might start thinking about your possessions. Are there things that are burdensome and you’d just as well get rid of? Are there other things you treasure? Are there things that get in the way of you connecting authentically with God? Are there things you’re over-attached to? Think of one realistic step you could take towards a simpler life in terms of your possessions. Maybe it’s giving unwanted possessions to a thrift store, or taking steps to organize (and at least not see disorganized “stuff” everywhere), or maybe it’s deliberately committing to think before you buy. Whatever you do, start by seeking to hold everything with an open hand before God.

Simplicity also involves our regular activities. Think about the things you do on a daily or monthly basis. Are you involved in way too many organizations that don’t seem to offer you or others much benefit? Do you find yourself being too busy to connect with family, friends, or God? Think of one realistic step you could take toward a simpler life in terms of your activities. Maybe it’s stepping back from an activity for a time. Maybe it’s more drastic like considering a new career. Whatever it is, talk to God about your desire to practice simplicity in your activities and ask for His wisdom in knowing what to say “yes” to and what to say “no” to.

How does this practice relate to what I’m facing?

■ **Simplicity about Money & Debt:**

When you’re bearing a large debt burden or when you’re seeking to rearrange your finances so you can more faithfully leverage all that God’s given you, simplicity is a good practice to take on. Combat debt and make resources available for giving by seeking to live more simply. Do you really need every possible digital TV streaming service? Or, could you get by with a more simplistic lifestyle?

■ **Simplicity with your family:**

Parents sometimes start wondering if they’re raising their kids to value material things too much and important things like relationships too little. Practice simplicity with your kids by having them weed through their toy boxes and pick out a favorite toy or game that they’ve outgrown. Help your child give it away. Put it in a toy drive for an overseas mission agency and show your child how children in that country get by without as much as we have. Or, share the toy with a younger neighbor, and talk about how excited you are that their old toy can have a new friend.

Solitude

Overview of the Practice of Solitude

Solitude is Intentionally removing yourself from interaction others so you can be completely alone with God and attentive to His presence. This allows you the physical, mental, and emotional space to hear God's voice without the distractions of others'.

What Scripture says

- [Psalm 46:10](#)
- Matthew 14:23; Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16

Incorporate this practice into your life

Solitude and journaling often go together. So, be sure to check out the spiritual practice of [journaling](#).

Set aside a time or a place where you can specifically seek out solitude. Turn off the TV, cell phone, radio, and all notifications from your devices. Spend that time with God, listening for His voice and responding to Him.

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing?

■ Solitude at work:

Incorporating this practice into your life regularly will take some planning. To have solitude wherever you're at, maybe you can pack a bag with a Bible and earphones. Set up a playlist of quiet music that doesn't interrupt your thoughts, and use it to drown out the noise around you. Choose a regular time every week (lunch on Tuesday, afternoon break on Wednesday, your morning commute) to deliberately get away from the stresses at work and seek solitude. Maybe you'll walk around the parking lot. Maybe you'll turn off the morning DJs and drive to work in peace. Maybe you'll grab lunch to go and sit outside and enjoy some quiet as you eat. Think of something that will stretch your schedule a bit, but still be realistic, and set out to do it consistently with God's help.

■ Solitude with a busy family:

Parents frequently find it hard to have any solitude! If you're a stay-at-home parent, it's tough to find even a few moments during the day when it's quiet, and even harder to find quiet moments when there aren't a million other things calling for your attention. Working parents also find it hard, you get home and want to spend every chance you can with your kids (in addition to doing all those necessary chores). To incorporate some solitude in your life might take some serious rearranging in your schedule. Try it – how can you arrange for time of quiet and separation despite your obligation to your kids? Can you get up a bit earlier, can you grab a moment during nap time? Ask God for help finding a way to incorporate this practice alone – or ask Him to guide you into a creative way that involves your kids, too.

■ Extended solitude:

Consider planning out an extended time of solitude, whether a couple hours on the weekend or a full day, once a month. If you're married, work with your spouse to schedule that time and encourage one another to prioritize spending an extended time alone with God. If possible, try to plan a solitude retreat once a year where you get away from your normal surroundings to be alone alone with God and let Him meet with you without the temptations of your normal daily routines.

Silence

Overview of the Practice of Silence

The practice of silence is intentionally being silent and seeking a quiet place in order to be more attentive to God's presence and voice. As writer Margaret Guenther said, we need times of "holy uselessness". When you combine Solitude and Silence, the point is not to be productive or make the time count in some way, but to be content to just be with God and let Him do with the time what He wants.

What Scripture Says

- [Habakkuk 2:20](#)
- [1 Kings 19:9-12](#)
- [Mark 6:31-32](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

You can incorporate the practice of silence in times where you get away to be alone with God. Silence is only really possible when you're alone with God. This doesn't mean that there is no noise around you, but that you get away from man-made noise. As much as you are able, find a still, quiet space where you won't be interrupted-

Step one: find a quiet space where you won't be interrupted-

- A secluded spot in your home (even a closet if need-be!)
- A bench outside near your work
- Under a tree in a park
- A hiking trail in the woods
- Anywhere in nature where you can be alone

Step two: schedule a time to spend in silence with God-

- During your lunch hour at work
- While kids are napping or after their bedtime
- Before your family gets up for the day
- Arrive to work before anyone else

Step three: listen

- Turn off your computer, phone, and any other technological device
- Set a timer so you won't keep looking at the clock
- Start small- begin with one-five minutes of silence and work up from there
- Submit to the awkwardness of being quiet; it's not something we're naturally comfortable with
- Resist the temptation to fill the silence with words
- Resist thoughts of things you need to do (if it helps, write all those things down that come to mind so you don't have to think of them now)
- Resist the temptation to *do* something, your one job is to sit or walk in *silence* with God
- Let the silence be, don't try to make sense of it or try to make it *worthwhile*. Simply committing to being silent before God, letting Him be God, is enough

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing:

It centers our identity in God as opposed to other things and provides the space for God to speak into whatever we are going through, if He so chooses.

Sacred Reading

Overview of the Practice of Sacred Reading

The practice of Sacred Reading is one of the most common Spiritual Disciplines. You might hear something like this called Devotional Reading, or Bible Reading, or having a Quiet Time. All these terms get at the same thing — reading Scripture and allowing God’s word to really soak into you. It’s very similar to Bible Study, except in Sacred Reading, you are reading Scripture not primarily to search for facts, but to hear from God. Sacred Reading not only involves reading the Bible, but also involves keeping up a conversation with God in prayer.

What Scripture says

- [Psalm 119:10-16](#)
- [Hebrews 4:12](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

You can incorporate Sacred Reading into your normal daily routine, as an interlude between times of more in-depth Bible study, or at special times with your small group or Running Partner. When reading the Bible devotionally, your focus is not necessarily on what concepts you can learn, what Bible characters you can better discover, nor what facts you can pick up — it is on listening to what God is saying through His word and responding to it.

Sacred reading is perhaps a less involved approach than some of the study methods you’re familiar with. You won’t need a highlighter or reference books — just a Bible and a quiet space. As you read Scripture, think of it, and pray about it, you are given an opportunity to hear God in a different way than you normally experience in your hectic life. Reading this way isn’t always easy; it requires you really to settle yourself before God and re-focus yourself when your mind wanders.

There are different approaches to Sacred Reading, but all generally involve picking a short passage of Scripture (the Psalms are a great place to start), reading it several times, slowly, and praying in response to it.

How does this practice relate to what I’m facing?

- **Sacred Reading when you feel despair:**

If you are feeling despair or hopelessness, try a Sacred Reading practice with these passages: Psalm 23, Psalm 37.

- **Sacred Reading when you feel tempted:**

Here are some possible passages to use in Sacred Reading, when facing temptation: Proverbs 1:10-17 or Psalm 73. Choose a passage and approach it with a Sacred Reading practice.

Scripture Memorization

Overview of the Practice of Scripture Memorization

Scripture memory is a spiritual practice where some simple effort learning Bible verses can make a big difference in your day to day life. As you commit portions of God's Word to memory, you are storing away knowledge that He can bring to mind later, at a time when you really need it.

What Scripture says

- [Psalm 119:11](#)
- [Deuteronomy 11:18](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

There are many reasons to memorize Scripture. This spiritual practice is an easy one to start with — pick a passage and commit it to memory.

The [Topical Memory System](#) is a popular tool to help you memorize Scripture. Relevant passages are sorted by topic.

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing?

- **Scripture Memory when feeling condemned:**Romans 8:1

Romans 8:1 is a great verse to memorize if you're feeling condemned for your past failings, or if you're ministering to others who wonder if God really can ever accept them. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..."

- **Scripture Memory about contentment:**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 & Philippians 4:11

Memorize these passages to refer to when wondering about contentment.

- **Scripture Memory about Temptation:**1 Corinthians 10:13

This is a longer passage to memorize, but you may consider it to repeat to yourself when feeling tempted.

- **Scripture Memory for encouragement:**Hebrews 3:13

Memorize this passage about the importance of encouraging others.

- **Scripture Memory about failure:**Philippians 3:14

You are not a failure. Consider Paul's words here as a goal to keep pushing onward despite any setbacks you face.

Service

Overview of the Practice of Service

The spiritual practice of service is all about doing it all for the glory of God. True servants look for ways to help others by just paying attention to what's happening around them. Using cues from what they see and hear, they connect with God by serving others. They don't do it for themselves – they do it for others, but along the way have the side-benefit of drawing closer to Jesus. True servants are people who take it to heart that they can work at anything and do it as praise to God.

The spiritual practice of service isn't easy – being a servant is hard. It can be humiliating; it can feel strange; it can take you places you wouldn't otherwise go. But, it's also a vital part of a spiritual life.

While you might think of service as a list of things to do – but service is found more in the attitude you have when you do those things. The spiritual practice of service might start by you taking on a particular role, but grows as you seek humble and hidden ways to minister to others.

What Scripture says

- [John 13:1-17](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

Your first steps into the practice of service will probably come slowly, something like offering to help a friend without expecting anything in return, cooking and doing the dishes so your spouse can rest, or making a one-day commitment to a volunteer project. As you grow in your expression of service, though, you might try to take a riskier step: commit to visit an elderly person every week (someone who is needy for companionship), sign up for a seemingly thankless task (and don't do it expecting reward) or do something that seems outside your comfort zone and isn't done to bring glory to yourself. Seek to do these acts for God, to express your love for Him.

Service is a spiritual practice — one you might exercise by being part of a serving team or volunteer role through your church, as well.

How does this practice relate to what I'm facing?

- **Service that brings Joy:**

Look for a way you can serve others that really brings you joy. We all have different things we're passionate about, and different things that excite us. Consider what fires you up and look for ways to serve in that area. It might be as simple as doing something around the house, or you might consider some kind of community involvement. Whatever you choose, the spiritual practice of service can bring you great joy.

- **Service when feeling angry or in conflict:**

Romans 12:17-21 quotes Proverbs — and talks about how we can serve even our enemies. Serving like this turns the tables in your mind; try it and see if your attitude changes.

- **Service instead of laziness:**

If you're feeling lazy, engaging in the spiritual practice of service may give you a chance to not just do something, but do something that's really significant. Overcome the desire to just sit on the sofa by looking for ways to connect with God through serving your family, friends, or community.

Worship

Overview of the Practice of Worship

In worship, we engage ourselves in connecting with God wholeheartedly. We express God's goodness and greatness either alone or in community, through words, songs, art, symbols, etc. Worship is seeing God as worthy — ascribing great worth to Him. In worship we both praise God for who He is and thank Him for what He has done.

What Scripture says

- [Psalm 8](#)

Incorporate this practice into your life

Experience God's creation and worship Him for it. Take a nature walk. Or, buy a single flower, and enjoy it until it starts to fade. At that point, take it apart petal by petal and think about how God created it. Sketch the flower, take a picture, or just remember the moment and thank God for his creation. Or, look at the stars before you go to bed tonight (or view the sunset if city lights prevent the stars from being plentiful). Worship God quietly as you ponder how big He is in creating the universe.

Participate in a time of corporate worship at your church.

Listening to worship music can be an easy and enjoyable way to incorporate the spiritual practice of worship into your every day life.

TRY IT OUT

Now that you have read through a few Spiritual Disciplines' descriptions, choose one or two to practice. But, take it slow. If you're wanting to grow in physical strength and recently started lifting weights, you don't start with the 50 lb dumbbells. You'll end up injured and discouraged. Instead, you start with the 8 or 10 lbs and work your way up. It's the same way with spiritual training. Start small.

If you decide fasting is your next step, for example, begin with fasting for one meal in a day, then move to two, then a 24-hour fast, etc. If you decide solitude and silence is your next step, begin by carving out one minute a day of sitting still in silence with the Lord and then add a minute each day, and so on. When it comes to spiritual practice, it's not about perfection but direction. If you can't make it a whole day without food, it's okay, you have not sinned, and there is nothing but grace for you! God's mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23), so each new day brings new grace to try again!

Share with your group what you plan to try out and how, and invite them to pray for you as you do. Review how it went with your group the next week.

Commitment to trying it out:

Spiritual discipline to practice: _____

How/when/ for how long I plan to practice this:

Reflections:

How did this spiritual discipline go?

What did I learn about God?

What did I learn about myself?

What was challenging?

What was encouraging?

Is there anything I want to do differently the next time I try on this discipline?

Spiritual discipline to practice: _____

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