



Walking in the Spiritual Disciplines

Bible Studies for Adults



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Walking in the Spiritual Disciplines

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Walking in the Spiritual Disciplines

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Special Introduction

This Spiritual Formation study series comes to you by request. Over the last year, I've asked numerous church leaders and teachers what kind of material they needed from the Bible Advocate Press. The overwhelming response was for lessons that aid local churches in developing deeper, intentional, and more resilient disciples. These lessons are an attempt to fulfill that request.

The Christian life lends itself to several metaphors. It is about walking in the way, climbing the mountain, cultivating fruit, and growing up. In all these we see what Eugene Peterson called “a long obedience in the same direction.” It is a process — the walk, the climb, the fruit, the growth — the product of time, dedication, and discipline. This is what authentic formation, the second word in our title, entails. It's what life-long discipleship looks like.

But the first word is even more important. Spiritual formation isn't self-help or a personal program. It is yielding ourselves to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. This journey to maturity isn't taken alone, for the Spirit goes with us, guiding us. As Paul said, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”; “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Galatians 5:25; Romans 8:14, NKJV). This is what Jesus' disciples do and are.

The four quarterlies in this series are about our life and journey in the Holy Spirit toward conformity to Christ. The first lessons will explore the spiritual disciplines and the foundations of discipleship. Next, we hike up the “mount” and hear Jesus' Beatitudes afresh (Matthew 5). The third quarterly will visit the orchard of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5). Finally, we conclude our series by studying how the Holy Spirit is growing up the body of Christ in a community of faith (Romans 12). We need each other on this journey. Let's get started, together.

— *Jason Overman, Editor*

Quarterly Introduction

Explore the American backyard in the throes of summer, and chances are you will find some sort of swimming pool providing cooling relief for family and friends alike. Pools come in all shapes and sizes — from the small ring for little children to the ones underground deep enough for diving.

When it comes to a relationship with God, He seeks swimmers who are not content to stay in the safety of the shallows. Nor does He want those content to paddle around on the surface with whatever life jacket they use to stay comfortable. God seeks those who are willing to dive deep into the fullness of who He is and the relationship He desires to offer. “He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6, NKJV).

Spiritual disciplines are the tools we must implement to achieve the fullness God longs for. Breaking down the title and our topic, we understand the disciplines, first, to be spiritual in nature, for God is Spirit and we must worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). With reliance on the Holy Spirit, we also develop this longing for relationship.

The other half of our title and topic belongs to a proper understanding of discipline, escaping the typical connotation of punishment or drudgery of duty. Discipline, or continuity of practice, brings liberation and joy as our effort and determination bring connection and closeness with the Spirit in us.

Throughout the course of this study, we invite you to remember and focus on four main questions to keep us on track. The application questions in each lesson will assist you in seeking out these answers.

- What is discipline? How does the Bible describe it? Does the world offer a different perspective?
- What examples from Jesus' life show how He practiced it?
- Why is this discipline important for our spiritual growth? How does it draw us closer to God?
- What are some practical steps we can take to make it a habit in our lives?

And, as a general reminder, with every passage of Scripture, we ask,

- What is this passage here for?
- Why was it included in the Bible for me to read?
- What am I to learn from it?

Ideas presented in these lessons rely on a couple of resources recommended for further study: Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, and Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*.

Full participation in the life of God's Kingdom and in the vivid companionship of Christ comes to us only through appropriate exercise in the disciplines for life in the spirit (Willard, p. 26).

God has ordained the Disciplines of the spiritual life as the means by which we place ourselves where He can bless us (Foster, p. 7).

Whether you have little experience practicing any of these disciplines, or are perhaps familiar with a few or comfortable with many, we invite you to come with us on this journey to greater spiritual maturity. The beauty of the depth of God is that there is always more to experience and explore!

— Kurt Lang
Author

Got Heartburn?

(A Passion for Jesus)

Read: They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” (Luke 24:32).

Focus: Becoming like Jesus begins with a desire to be like Jesus.

Think

Throughout this study, the focus will be on understanding and applying the life of Jesus and on how to emulate Him so we can grow closer to the relationship God desires with His people. The disciplines covered in these lessons should be considered key ingredients of a robust spiritual life. That said, the list provided is not exhaustive. You might find others helpful as well.

Before proceeding any further, it is critical to recognize that the disciplines are a means, not an end. Creating habits in our lives for the sake of successfully implementing them equates us to the Pharisees of Jesus’ day. The goal is not completion of a list; rather, the goal must be centered around a mature yet continually growing relationship with our Creator. In their proper use and context, practicing the disciplines will stimulate and achieve that growth.

Because God is faithful, we, in turn, desire to obey so that we also can

be found faithful. Yet, following Jesus is not complete simply by obeying. We can obey God's laws throughout our lifetime but never understand or come to know the heart connection God gives us as a motivation for that obedience. How sad it is for the one who never moves past the external reward of obedience!

On the road to Emmaus, the disciples were kept from physically recognizing Jesus, yet in their spirit there was a passionate heart connection they couldn't describe (Luke 24:13-35). What about us? Is Jesus close by, yet we fail to recognize Him? If we seek Him only through our physical senses, He will elude us. Jesus says that when we seek Him with our heart, soul, mind, and strength, we will grasp the love He has for us (Mark 12:30).

Whenever we have questions about who Jesus is, we must remember that the answers are more than meets the eye and are not always easy to understand. But they will be consistent with Scripture. Jesus is revealed to us in the Word of God. He is central to its message. But there's one more thing to keep in mind as we look for Jesus: It takes the heart to recognize Him (Luke 24:32).

Knowing Jesus is more than just understanding the facts and what we can see with our senses. This relationship also involves our heart — our passions, our innermost connections, our worship. The psalmist wrote of this "heartburn" for God:

As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalm 42:1, 2, NKJV).

This "heartburn" is . . .

- a pure and holy passion — the desire to know Christ;
- a magnificent obsession — something you can't ignore, can't get enough of;
- a glorious ambition — something you will pursue at all costs;
- the knowledge that nothing compares to experiencing the love of God.

Achieving the heart connection along with the disciplines comes through the work of the Holy Spirit, directing our spirit into greater recognition and relationship. Pray for the increase of this desire! Without it, the practice of these disciplines will not take you far.

Apply

1. For what purpose should we make a habit of practicing spiritual disciplines?

2. Reflect on the comment "It is critical to recognize that the disciplines are a means, not an end."

3. Read and discuss Psalm 42:1, 2 and Luke 24:32. Do these passages currently describe you? Why or why not?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the strongest, where would you place your current level of involvement in the disciplines we are about to study? Circle the number.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. On the same number line above, put a square around your current level of passion to pursue a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Discuss why your marked numbers might be different.

6. Training ourselves to be godly holds promise for both the present life and the life to come (1 Timothy 4:7, 8). Describe some of these promises.

Ponder

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord, so I can see You.

Know and Be Known

(The Example of Jesus)

Read: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV).

Focus: Jesus knew the Father and provided an example for us to know Him as well.

Think

Ever lie awake at night wondering, *What's my purpose in life?* To answer that question, we must first answer this: “What was Jesus’ purpose in life?” Once we know His purpose, we can figure out our own.

Why did Jesus come to earth? Besides coming to be our sacrificial Lamb, He desired to show us the Father and to set the example for us in how to live (John 14:7-10; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

Our salvation doesn't stop with the forgiveness of sins. It continues as we allow ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit and learn how to live a godly life. In total obedience to God the Father, Jesus set the perfect example of godly living: among many, a love for enemies, compassion for others, prayer, and service.

And Jesus calls us to follow Him — to take up our cross daily and deny ourselves (Matthew 16:24, 25). Why is this important? Because beyond taking away our sins or showing us how to live, God wants us to know

Him and have a relationship with Him — to know us and be known by us (John 17:3; Hebrews 8:10).

God wants to be our God. Just as Moses talked with God as friend to friend, God desires the same kind of relationship with every one of us. When Jesus lived as a human on this earth, He knew God and was known by God. Throughout His ministry, Jesus referred to God as His Father, and God called Jesus His Son (Matthew 3:17).

Jesus says that if we want to connect with God as our Father, and if we want Him to be well pleased with us, we need to do what He did. People know we are His disciples when we follow in His footsteps, loving one another and abiding in Him (John 13:34, 35; 1 John 2:6).

In Jesus' day, when a rabbi called a young person to "Follow me," the mentee was responsible to do and say everything exactly like his teacher (Matthew 10:24, 25). Everywhere the rabbi went, his disciple would follow. Every word he spoke, his disciple would say similar things. Every bit of wisdom and understanding the rabbi lived by would also become the wisdom that characterized his young learner.

This is why Jesus calls us all to be His disciples: so that, as our great Rabbi, we'll do as He did.

We are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, practicing His patterns and habits. In doing so, we know God, just as He knows us, and we fulfill the purpose He has for us.

Apply

1. What was Jesus' purpose in coming to earth, and how does His purpose inform our own?

2. What is a disciple and the Master's expectation for a disciple? Discuss the implication of these verses for our lives today. Matthew 10:24, 25; 16:24, 25.

3. What is the ultimate goal of following Jesus? How is Jesus' relationship with God described, and how does that inform our relationship with Him? John 17:3; Hebrews 8:10; Matthew 3:17.

4. Discuss the metaphor of walking as Jesus walked. How would you summarize His "footsteps" and your success in following them? John 13:34, 35; 1 John 2:6.

5. Discuss this question: "How can ordinary human beings such as you and I . . . follow and become like Jesus Christ? . . . How can we be like Him not as a pose or by a constant and grinding effort, but with the ease and power He had . . . ?" (Willard, p. 14).

6. Do you know Jesus as He knows you? If not, what's holding you back?

Ponder

A close look at Jesus' "great acts" of humility, faith, and compassion recorded in the Gospel narratives finds them to be moments in a life more pervasively and deeply characterized by solitude, fasting, prayer and service. Surely, then, the lives of His followers must be just as deeply characterized by those same practices. (Willard, pp. 28-29)

Who's Leading You?

(The Work of the Holy Spirit)

Read: For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:14).

Focus: God sent His Holy Spirit as a gift to help us grow in our relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit is key to our spiritual maturity.

Think

Jesus walked this earth as a physical human being and set the example for us of how to live. But without the connection of the Spirit to our physical actions, they are meaningless accomplishments. Our physical being must be connected to and led by our spiritual being, controlled by the Holy Spirit.

This is how God designed us. While we live on earth, our physical body is the home for the Holy Spirit. Paul explains that our bodies are jars of clay that hold within them the power of God (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 4:7). In order to be like Jesus and live as He lived, we must let God fill us with His Holy Spirit.

The Bible does not denigrate our physical body. God designed it, "and it was very good." But when sin entered the picture, our spiritual connection to God was lost. Fleshly desires subverted both our minds and bodies. Christ came to raise our body back to life, to restore it to its proper function. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to restore our

spiritual connection to the Father and restore His proper place in us (John 14:15-17; Romans 12:1, 2). So the question is, “Who is leading us: the flesh or the Spirit?” (Galatians 5:16-26).

The term *spiritual disciplines* says it all. It implies that both His Spirit and our bodies are necessary to practice the disciplines, like prayer, fasting, and Sabbath. We cannot do whatever we want in this body and have our spirit unaffected. In order for it to thrive, the actions our physical body takes must align with the Spirit and be pleasing to God.

So just as work of the *Spirit* is essential to practicing the *spiritual* disciplines, so *personal* discipline is necessary to practicing physical disciplines. That is how we actively choose to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God (Romans 12:1). Our spiritual worship is connected to our physical activities and choices. Discipline (or discipleship) involves our time and attention. It involves what we choose to do and focus on. It deals with the habits we build our activity around. We can't practice the disciplines without discipline.

There is no magic formula or class to teach us how to be filled with the Spirit. It is the gift of God. However, here are ways we can be ready to receive this indwelling:

- Act like Jesus in our daily decisions.
- Give time to studying His Word.
- Tune out of the world so we can hear His voice.
- Focus on the needs of our spirit, not just of our body.
- Worship Him alone and with believers.
- Seek His plan and not our own through prayer.

When we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, when we develop habits that align with God's teaching, we grow in our relationship with Him, we are enabled to practice spiritual disciplines. Are we ready to answer God's call to be led by the Spirit?

To submit ourselves to the Spirit's leading is to accept God's plan for us — to accept His life as our own; to be in relationship with Him; to be conformed to the example of Jesus. The spiritual disciplines are steps in God's plan, but we cannot practice them in our own strength. We must be led by God's Spirit.

Apply

1. How does the knowledge that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit affect daily decisions, actions, and how you care for your body? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20.
2. Discuss the implications of life in the flesh vs. life in the Spirit. Romans 8:1-17.
3. How do we choose initially to let the Holy Spirit dwell in us? Acts 2:38. How do we choose daily to continue that indwelling? Romans 12:1, 2.
4. What happens when we let the Holy Spirit dwell in us? Acts 1:8; John 14:26.
5. What bad habits do you need to leave behind so that your body will relinquish control to your spirit?
6. Of the spiritual disciplines listed in Lessons 4-13 (see Table of Contents), which two or three are most visible in your life? Which are the least evident?

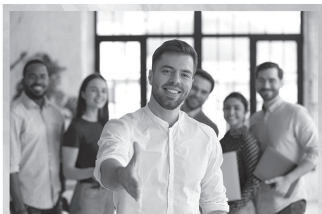
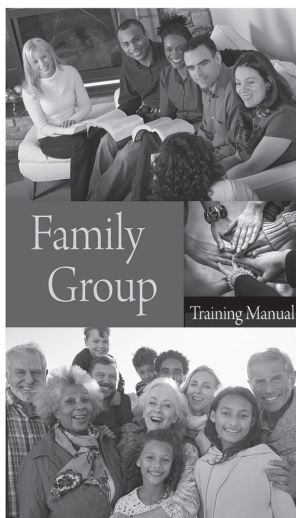
Ponder

When we discipline ourselves to spend time with God instead of with the distractions of the world, He will fill us with His presence and power through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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A Student of the Word

(Study and Memorization)

Read: Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15, KJV).

Focus: We must understand the importance of regular study and memorization of God's Word for our spiritual health.

Think

God has preserved His Word, the Holy Bible, over many centuries. As His followers, we must recognize the significance of this major accomplishment. The Bible exists today for our benefit, that we may learn of God and His ways. It also exists for God's benefit, to bring Him glory and draw people to Him.

God's thoughts and ways are not always clear to us. We must work to understand what He allows us to know. Two ways we can do this are study and memorization of Scripture. Both are expected, even required, of us that we might know and declare the goodness of God.

The dictionary says that *study* is the application of the mind to the acquisition of knowledge, as by reading, investigation, or reflection. You are studying when you set your mind to taking in something new, or building on the foundations of what you already know.

Study involves more than just a cursory reading of selected Bible passages. To rightly divide the Word of Truth, one seeks to uncover the many facets of any given biblical topic by incorporating the various threads weaved throughout the whole. Tools to assist in this might include a concordance, thesaurus, study Bibles, various Bible translations, Bible dictionaries, and other resources.

Study is also more than just learning what the Bible says. It involves observing the world around us and how God's principles are played out in nature, in cultures, and in relationships.

Along with study, memorization is repeating or rereading biblical passages until one can speak them without reading. The psalmist helps us understand this discipline and its purpose:

How can a young man cleanse his way?
By taking heed according to Your word.
With my whole heart I have sought You;
Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!
Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You.
Blessed are You, O LORD!
Teach me Your statutes.
With my lips I have declared
All the judgments of Your mouth.
I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.
I will meditate on Your precepts,
And contemplate Your ways.
I will delight myself in Your statutes;
I will not forget Your word (Psalm 119:9-16).

In short, memorization is hiding God's Word in our heart (v. 11a). For what purpose? "That I might not sin against You" or "forget Your word" (vv. 11b, 16).

While we might not always have a Bible or Bible app with us, we can always carry it in our minds. In doing so, we apply it to our lives as it shows us how to please God and walk in His ways. Memorization helps us look into the law of liberty and continue in it, not forgetting what we just read and learned (James 1:22-25).

The best study and memorization are done regularly. Building a pattern of repetition, concentration, comprehension, and reflection

cultivates a strong habit. This sets the foundation for growth in the other spiritual disciplines, as we learn of them here in God's Word and what they mean for us today. We cannot ignore them!

Apply

1. In your own words, define the disciplines of *study* and *memorization*.

2. What does the Bible teach us about these disciplines? Psalm 119: 9-16; 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:22-25. Does the world, or do other religions, teach anything different?

3. How did Jesus practice study and memorization? What example(s) did He give us to follow? Matthew 4:1-11; Mark 12:24-27.

4. Why is the practice of these disciplines important to our spiritual growth? What do they teach us about God's character? How do they draw us closer to Him?

5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making study and memorization habits? If we don't make them habits?

6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making these disciplines a habit in your life?

Ponder

"You've got to get into the Word of God so the Word of God can get in you" (Lynn Taylor, deceased CoG7 pastor).

Adjust Your Focus

(Meditation)

Read: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer (Psalm 19:14).

Focus: We must seek a proper understanding of meditation and its importance for a right connection with God.

Think

Meditation is a key element of Old Testament life, dating back many centuries. Eastern religions have made it more popular in the past few decades. Say the word *meditation*, and you will likely think of someone sitting cross-legged with palms up, eyes closed, and uttering some kind of chant. Or trying to catch a fly with chopsticks. These popular images, however, should not dissuade us from pursuing meditation.

The difference lies in the focus. Eastern meditation endeavors to empty the mind. One is to lose oneself and become one with the cosmos, disconnecting from individuality and reality. Christian meditation, on the other hand, does not empty the self but fills the mind with the things of God. Meditation is not to escape reality. Rather, it is to better learn how to live in it in the presence of God.

Meditation also differs from study, which we covered last week. Loosely defined, *study* entails learning about God and how He works in

the world. Meditation is key not so much for information *about* God as for connection *with* God. Put another way, it highlights the difference between knowing *about* God and knowing God. Study attempts to analyze a passage of Scripture, whereas meditation seeks to personalize it.

Richard Foster explains this process: "Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God's voice and obey his word" (p. 17). Abraham, Eli, Elijah, Samuel, Jeremiah, and Moses were among many who heard the voice of the Lord because they were willing to listen and obey.

According to Psalm 19:14, we meditate with the heart. Meditation also involves seeking God in fear and reverence (Job 15:4). Much about meditation, good and bad, can be found in the Psalms (1:2; 38:12; 63:6; 77:6, 12; 143:5). Psalm 119:97-104 is particularly instructive:

Oh, how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my
enemies;
For they are ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers,
For Your testimonies are my meditation.
I understand more than the ancients,
Because I keep Your precepts.
I have restrained my feet from every evil way,
That I may keep Your word.
I have not departed from Your judgments,
For You Yourself have taught me.
How sweet are Your words to my taste,
Sweeter than honey to my mouth!
Through Your precepts I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way (NKJV).

Here, we are brought back to Adam and Eve's communion and connection with God in the garden.

Meditation is best practiced when alone with God. More on this will be covered in the lesson on solitude. Suffice it to say, while there is nothing ritualistic about it, the art of finding a regular time and place for implementing the Word is a key component in meditation. That said, having a heart for meditation is akin to Paul's admonition to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Apply

1. In your own words, define the discipline of meditation.

2. What does the Bible teach us about this discipline? Psalm 19:14; 119:97-104. (Also, see other psalms referenced above.) Does the world, or do other religions, attempt to teach anything different? How and why?

3. How did Jesus practice meditation? What example(s) did He give us to follow? Consider Jesus' ability to hear God's voice and obey His Word. Luke 21:14; John 5:19; 10:4; 14:10.

4. Why is practicing this discipline important to our spiritual growth? What does it teach us about God's character? How does it draw us closer to Him?

5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making this discipline a habit? If we don't make it a habit?

6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making meditation a habit in your life?

Ponder

Meditation is the practice of a heart connection with our almighty God and Creator.

“Lord, Teach Us to Pray” (Prayer)

Read: Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1).

Focus: We can gain a fresh perspective on prayer and its place in our communion with God.

Think

This week’s lesson adds another discipline to our learning: the dimension of prayer. Simply put, prayer is talking with God, but remember that it is not monologue but dialogue. Additionally, prayer is not an opportunity to share our wish list with God. It is His method of sharing His heart with us. Prayer is tuning the dial to God’s frequency.

Connections abound in the Scriptures regarding this topic. Today, we will only scratch the surface, but you can always go home and *study* it more! Prayer is the discipline that connects most with other disciplines. We can *study* prayer and *memorize* biblical prayers that speak to us. *Meditation* naturally leads to prayer. Looking ahead in these lessons, *fasting* is often partnered with prayer. *Solitude* and *silence* afford opportunities for God to speak to us in time of prayer, and so on.

Prayer can be difficult to master. We might struggle with the feeling that God does not hear or that we cannot hear Him. Our confidence is

bruised when our desired answers do not come. Verses like John 14:13, 14, citing Jesus' promise to do anything we ask, can cause us to doubt when what we desire does not happen. Of course, James 4:2, 3 clarifies that we can ask amiss.

A common phrase in the Old Testament, "Pray to the Lord," reminds us of our duty to seek God with our burdens and requests. It also calls to our attention the only One who can answer. Elijah proved this when he called on God on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:36-39).

Jesus' disciples recognized the difference prayer made in His life, and felt the desire to emulate Him. Hence, their question that prompted Jesus to respond with the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-13). Jesus modeled prayer, often going to lonely places to pray (Mark 1:35) and praying in public (John 17).

How might we practice this discipline? As with the other disciplines, Scripture is more descriptive than prescriptive. Our traditions become enmeshed into our practice as well, such as the common use of "In Jesus' name I pray," described in John 14 but never prescribed as necessary by our Lord.

Common questions regarding prayer abound. "When should we pray?" (Psalm 88:13; Acts 3:1). Paul answers, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), though this is more in attitude than practice. "Anywhere" is the answer to where we should pray, as Scripture illustrates (cf. Acts 10:9; 16:13; 22:17; Matthew 6:6; 1 Timothy 2:8).

Is there a certain position to pray in? Ezra 10:1; Daniel 6:10; and Matthew 6:5 all provide examples, but again, not commands.

What should we include in our prayers? Following our pattern, this could include anything, though again we find sound examples (Acts 8:24; Romans 10:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Philippians 4:6; James 5:16). Even when we don't know how to pray, the Spirit helps us (Romans 8:26).

Still need ideas? A couple of acronyms have been developed to remind us of prayer centered around ACTS: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Or PRAY: Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield (based on the example of the Lord's Prayer).

Again, we've just scratched the surface. Keep digging!

Apply

1. In your own words, define the discipline of prayer.

2. What does the Bible teach us about this discipline? (Select some of the verses referenced above.) Does the world, or do other religions, teach anything different?

3. How did Jesus practice this discipline? What example(s) did He give us to follow? Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; Luke 22:39-46; John 17.

4. Why is the practice of prayer important to our spiritual growth? What does it teach us about God's character? How does it draw us closer to Him?

5. In our character and lifestyle and in the way we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making prayer a habit? If we don't make it a habit?

6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making this discipline a habit in your life?

Ponder

Our prayers may be awkward. Our attempts may be feeble. But since the power of prayer is in the One who hears it and not in the one who says it, our prayers do make a difference.

— *Max Lucado*

What's for Breakfast?

(Fasting)

Read: “But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Matthew 6:17, 18).

Focus: From the Word of God, we can grasp the unique perspective fasting provides in focusing on our spirit over our flesh.

Think

Adding to our study on prayer from last week, fasting is a natural fit. Though prayer does not always involve fasting, a proper view of fasting always includes prayer. The two are a powerful combination (Mark 9:29, NKJV). Several examples in Scripture pair them (Nehemiah 1:4; Daniel 9:3; Jonah 3:7-9; Luke 2:37; Acts 14:23).

Some people fast for political reasons, like a hunger strike protesting an injustice, etc. Some fast for physical reasons, for the health benefits associated with it. Biblical fasting, however, always includes a spiritual purpose.

Fasting usually involves abstinence from food, though in recent times it has been applied to TV, social media, and other entertainment mediums or pastimes. Daniel refused specific foods, but ate others, for twenty-one days (“the Daniel fast,” 10:3). Moses, Elijah, and Jesus had

supernatural forty-day fasts without food and water (Exodus 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8, 9; Matthew 4:1, 2). This shouldn't be attempted unless specifically directed by God, as the human body can typically go no more than three days without water.

Scripture gives a variety of occasions and reasons for fasting: a time of divine learning for Moses (Exodus 34:28); part of the Day of Atonement celebration for Israel (Leviticus 23:27); and David's sorrow over personal wrongdoing and petition for healing (2 Samuel 12:16, 17). Esther fasted for a national emergency (4:16); Jehoshaphat for protection from national enemies (2 Chronicles 20:1-4); and the Ninevites for mercy and forgiveness (Jonah 3:6-10). Anna fasted in worship and thanks (Luke 2:36-38); Paul sought God's deliverance (Acts 27:21, 33); and church leaders sought God's direction (13:2, 3).

The duration and frequency of fasting is up to the individual. Scripture gives us no command. Jesus said, "When you fast . . ." (Matthew 6:17), implying that we will fast, but with no guideline for when or how often.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained how to practice righteousness and fasting (vv. 16-18). A person should not fast to *appear* righteous, as the Pharisees did. Though corporate fasts with church or family are appropriate, Jesus' focus is on fasting as a personal act that takes place between God and us. It is not about ritual but relationship.

In His own experience and teaching, Jesus showed why fasting is meaningful. We need more than bread alone for life; we need God's Word (Matthew 4:1-4; John 4:32, 34). Jesus said that, ultimately, our spiritual body is more important than our physical body. He was nourished, not with food but by doing the Father's will. Fasting helps us keep the same perspective. It reminds us that our obedience and relationship to God take priority over anything this world offers. Our physical body reminds us that we need nourishment. Fasting reminds us that our spirit needs nourishing even more!

Never fasted? Start by skipping a meal, and use that time to pray or study. Then try a twenty-four-hour fast. If you feel led, move up to two to three days. Drink plenty of water while you fast. This gives you the best physical and spiritual benefits.

Fasting assists us in seeking God's heart. It aids in our prayers of repentance and reconciliation, reminds us we are sustained by God, and illustrates our need for Him. It helps us keep a balance in life, focusing on needs over wants and our spiritual fitness alongside our physical fitness.

Apply

1. In your own words, define *fasting*.
2. What does the Bible teach us about this discipline? (Choose some of the verses above.) Does the world, or do other religions, attempt to teach anything different?
3. How did Jesus practice fasting? What example(s) did He give us to follow, or what commands did He give us to obey? Matthew 4:1-4; 6:16-18; Mark 9:25-29; John 4:31-34.
4. Why is the practice of this discipline important to our spiritual growth? What does it teach us about God's character? How does it draw us closer to Him?
5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making fasting a habit? If we don't make it a habit?
6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making this discipline a habit in your life?

Ponder

The focus of fasting is not to abstain from food, but to feast on the Word of God.



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Let's Play the Quiet Game

(Silence and Solitude)

Read: “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” (Psalm 46:10).

Focus: We can develop a practice of tuning out the world — even our own voice — to better hear God’s message of love and desire for relationship with us.

Think

Stop. Take a moment. What do you hear right now? The voice of the person reading this? The ticking of a clock? Someone’s cell phone ringing? Someone tapping on the table with their pen or their foot on the floor? The coffee pot brewing?

Noise is all around us. Even when we are sitting in silence, some noise will make its way into our ears, and that can be distracting. God has much He wants to say, but with so much noise in the world, His voice is lost in the chaos. We must learn again how to play the quiet game.

Oftentimes we ask, “Why isn’t God speaking to me?” We may try to listen for His voice at times, or maybe we just aren’t quiet enough to hear it. Developing the disciplines of silence and solitude will greatly help us.

God spoke to Elijah in a “low whisper” (1 Kings 19:9-13). The prophet recognized His voice in the silence. For him, it wasn’t in the wind or the earthquake or fire — in none of the noisy things. It was in the quiet.

Sometimes we think of God as being strong, loud, and forceful — which He is! But when He wants to talk directly to us, most of the time He won’t be forceful. He will wait until He knows we are listening, because then He knows He really has our attention. And He will speak in a quiet, soothing voice.

The best way for us to put ourselves in a position to listen for and hear the voice of God is to purposefully be silent and spend time with Him in solitude. It’s called active listening. Listening not just with our ears but paying attention with all of our senses.

Silence is not the absence of sound. Being silent before God doesn’t necessarily mean we won’t hear other noises but that we are tuning them out in order to listen to Him. Solitude is not loneliness. It doesn’t necessarily mean we are alone but that we can focus on God in the midst of our circumstances.

These disciplines also benefit our prayer life. Jesus provided the example of solitude in Mark 1:35. Spending time alone with the Father wasn’t accidental; even Jesus made it a habit. He needed one-on-one time with the Father too. He taught His disciples to do the same, inviting them to join Him in solitude and rest (Mark 6:30-32).

How might we make silence and solitude a practice in our lives? Try turning off your phone or radio at specific times. Sit in your bedroom alone for thirty minutes praying, studying, or meditating on God’s Word. Take a walk in nature; find a quiet place you can return to. Duration and location can vary. The important aspect is to intentionally spend time and effort in listening for God.

Apply

1. In your own words, define *silence* and *solitude*.

2. What does the Bible teach us about these disciplines? (Review some of the verses above, or others you are familiar with.) Does the world, or do other religions, attempt to teach anything different?

3. How did Jesus practice silence and solitude? What example(s) did He give us to follow, or what commands did He give us to obey? Matthew 14:13, 23; 26:36-46; Luke 5:16; 6:12.

4. Why is the practice of these disciplines important to our spiritual growth? What do they teach us about God's character? How do they draw us closer to Him?

5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making silence and solitude habits? If we don't make them habits?

6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making this discipline a habit in your life?

Ponder

God promises to reveal His greatness in the stillness (Psalm 46:10). Are we in a position to listen?

Give It Away

(Simplicity and Giving)

Read: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21).

Focus: Perhaps more than any of the other disciplines, simplicity and giving are designed not just for our benefit but also for the blessing of others.

Think

As we continue our walk through the disciplines, it’s worth a reminder that our goal is not to merely create habits. Our goal is to be more like Jesus! Giving is perhaps the most important example Jesus provided, for He gave up His very life as a ransom for our sins (Matthew 20:28).

Simplicity is contentment. It means that we don’t need the fanciest car or biggest house. It is making sure we don’t go into huge debt buying things we cannot afford. Simplicity is a mindset that the fewer possessions we own, the less time we need to commit to keeping them.

Likewise, giving is an attitude that whatever we do possess, we choose to use not just for ourselves but also for the benefit of others. What we receive, we willingly share.

The disciplines of simplicity and giving are closely related, so we’ll talk about them together. When we focus on one, the other naturally comes

into view. Both disciplines help us develop resistance to the materialism and consumerism plaguing our world.

Richard Foster writes, "Simplicity sets us free to receive the provision of God as a gift that is not ours to keep and can be freely shared with others." Simplicity and giving relate to our possessions and finances. They focus on our material wealth. The real question for us is "How much of *our* focus in this life is wrapped up in our wealth and worldly possessions?"

Jesus talked about money and economics more than any other single social issue. Many of His teachings and parables relate in some way to money. Jesus did not call us to denounce money and possessions. He encouraged us to use money wisely — not for our own gain but for helping others. Jesus reminded us not to trust in our wealth and possessions, but to be good stewards of them for His purposes. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we find one of His greatest teachings about simplicity and giving (Matthew 6:19-34).

But these disciplines are not just about material possessions; they also relate to our time and talents. How much time do we spend on ourselves? How much are we giving to our family, church, and community? Are we using the time God has given us to bless others? And what about our talents? God has gifted us in various ways. Are we using those gifts for ourselves, or are we using them to serve others?

Jesus lived simply, with no focus on material possessions (Matthew 8:20). He did not teach that possessions are evil but that our attitude about them brings either reward or trouble. Paul didn't say that money is the root of all evil but that the love of money is (1 Timothy 6:10). Seeking God first means we love and trust *Him*, not our stuff!

Jesus had a spirit of giving. He had hardly any material possessions, but He spent time with people and provided gifts of healing. Ultimately, He gave His life. We are to live simply and give generously as well.

Apply

1. In your own words, define *simplicity* and *giving*.

2. What does the Bible teach us about these disciplines? (Review some of the verses above or others you are familiar with.) Does the world, or do other religions, teach anything different?

3. How did Jesus practice simplicity and giving? What example(s) did He give us to follow, or what commands did He give us to obey? Matthew 6:19-21; 16:24, 25; Luke 12:13-34; 16:13.

4. Why is the practice of simplicity and giving important to our spiritual growth? What do they teach us about God's character? How do they draw us closer to Him?

5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making these disciplines habits? If we don't make them habits?

6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making these disciplines habits in your life?

Ponder

The gifts of God have been given to us so that we can give them away.

Give It a Rest

(Sabbath)

Read: “If you call the Sabbath a delight . . . then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land . . .” (Isaiah 58:13, 14, NIV).

Focus: “A memorial of both creation and redemption, the Sabbath should be celebrated faithfully by believers now as a day of rest, worship, and well doing.” (CoG7 Statement of Faith)

Think

What a coincidence! Here we are on the Sabbath, and we’re going to talk about the Sabbath. This spiritual discipline seems to be easy for us, since we are right here practicing it!

But let’s dig deeper. Since our Statement of Faith was taught in the previous quarterlies, we already know why we celebrate the Sabbath. However, let’s focus here on the second half of our Statement of Faith on the Sabbath.

The Ten Commandments show that the Sabbath is a memorial of creation and redemption. In the original Exodus 20 version, the fourth commandment is linked to remembering God’s seventh-day rest after His six days of creation. The Deuteronomy 5 version connects the Sabbath to remembering God’s redemption of Israel from slavery. Both Sabbath commandments are observed in commemoration of God’s great acts

of power and love. Those awesome events take on even greater significance with the coming of Christ.

As Creator and Savior, Jesus set a Sabbath example, reinforcing the command to remember and celebrate the Sabbath as a day of rest, worship, and well doing.

“Come to me . . . and I will give you rest,” Jesus stated, connecting Himself to the Sabbath rest only He could give (Matthew 11:28; Hebrews 4). Jesus worshipped each Sabbath in the synagogue, setting the example for the new believers (Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:42-44). More than once, Jesus offended the Pharisees by doing good to others, healing and restoring them on the Sabbath (John 5:8, 9).

The Sabbath is a constant reminder that God will keep His promise to give us salvation through Jesus and eternal life with Him. It’s also a reminder that we cannot earn salvation on our own; it’s a gift. Yes, we are called to follow Jesus and do good works, but not to earn our spot in the kingdom. We do them because we are already members of the kingdom!

As a discipline, how might we develop a habit of honoring the Sabbath? We must cease and rest, worship and do good according to the rhythm God established. If our motivation coincides with Isaiah’s, we are well on our way. The Sabbath should be a delight as we honor our Lord and Savior (Isaiah 58:13, 14).

It takes some discipline to cease from our busy lives. When we do, we find joy. We can celebrate the Sabbath by using that time differently than we do the rest of the week. We should seek what brings God pleasure, not just us. God’s pleasure is to connect with us. We should be purposeful in spending Sabbath with believers and studying God’s Word, as well as honoring God by honoring and helping others. We should let Sabbath remind us of Jesus’ gift of salvation and all that He has done for us. We can worship the Lord in our learning, in our testimony, in our singing, in our attitude. As we do these things, the God of the universe will meet us as we set aside time to spend with Him.

When God sees our obedience, when He knows we seek Him with a heart of expectation, He honors us with His blessing and presence. He will make us “ride on the heights of the earth”! And if we don’t understand yet what that means, we can make a habit of seeking the Lord on His Sabbath and see what happens!

Apply

1. In your own words, define *Sabbath*.

2. What does the Bible teach us about this discipline? (Review some of the verses above, or others you are familiar with.) Does the world, or do other religions, teach anything different?

3. How did Jesus practice Sabbath observance? What example(s) did He give us to follow, or what commands did He give us to obey? Matthew 11:28—12:12; Mark 1:21; 2:23-28; 6:2; Luke 4:16; 6:6-9; 13:10-16.

4. Why is the practice of the Sabbath important to our spiritual growth? What does it teach us about God's character? How does it draw us closer to Him?

5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making this discipline a habit? If we don't make it a habit?

6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making the Sabbath a meaningful habit in your life?

Ponder

The Sabbath is not a chore, but a joy. Taste it again for the first time!

As You Wish

(Submission and Service)

Read: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, NKJV).

Focus: Our natural inclination is to serve and preserve self. It takes practice and discipline to find joy in serving God and others.

Think

In the movie *The Princess Bride*, a young farmhand would always say, “As you wish” in response to whatever the farmer’s daughter asked of him. He was really saying, “I love you.” Love motivates us to do for others what we wouldn’t ordinarily do. We show them that we love them by serving them — *as they wish*.

Submission is placing ourselves under the control or authority of another. It is the freedom to value other people and place their desires above our own. We also find freedom in submission, and that is “. . . the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way” (Foster, 111).

Submission to one another is a sign of trust, even of obedience. It is how we walk with Jesus and show reverence to Him (Ephesians 5:15, 21). Submission to others is an act of love, characterized by what Christ did for the church.

Submission has nothing to do with inferiority; it is not tied to our

worth. It is not something forced upon us. When it is, it becomes destructive. Godly submission is a choice of our free will, a choice to give up something, not a method of coercion.

Jesus gave us the example as He submitted to the Father's authority (John 8:28). Sinless, He perfectly obeyed. Sin is going our own way and disobeying God, but Jesus never went His own way. His love for us and for His Father motivated Him to choose submission.

Service, the other discipline covered in this lesson, goes hand in hand with submission. Serving shows high regard for others and puts their needs above our own (Philippians 2:1-4). This is the glue that holds us together as a church. Helping one another in humility puts our focus on others rather than on ourselves.

Serving is not just about the tangible activities we do. It's about standing up for others, upholding their dignity. It is expressed in simple acts of appreciation and hospitality. We serve by listening, by being compassionate, and by sharing the good news of Jesus. Serving can even include accepting the service of others with gratitude.

The Gospels are full of details on how Jesus served others. One of the best examples we find is at the Last Supper when Jesus took a towel and washed the disciples' feet. He filled the role that a servant normally would fill, then told us to do the same (John 13:1-17).

Jesus defines greatness by service and submission. Just like Him, we should serve at the feet of others. This is the cross we take up and the example we must follow (Mark 8:34; 10:42-45).

Apply

1. In your own words, define *submission* and *service*.
2. What does the Bible teach us about these disciplines? Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 6:13; Psalm 100; Ephesians 5:15-33; Philippians 2:1-8; James 4:7. Does the world, or do other religions, teach anything different?

3. How did Jesus practice submission and service? What example(s) did He give us to follow, or what commands did He give us to obey? Mark 10:42-45; Luke 16:13, John 12:25-27; 13:1-17.
4. Why is the practice of these disciplines important to our spiritual growth? What do they teach us about God's character? How do they draw us closer to Him?
5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making submission and service habits? If we don't make them habits?
6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making these disciplines habits in your life?

Ponder

Jesus submitted His will to the Father. He served others with His life. When Jesus asks us to submit and serve alongside Him, are we ready to say, "As You wish"?

It's Party Time!

(Celebration and Fellowship)

Read: “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10, NKJV).

Focus: Celebration and fellowship help answer the *why* and *how* of practicing the disciplines as the Christian life displays the fruit of the Spirit.

Think

In short, practicing the spiritual disciplines involves seeking the understanding of God and His will for us, following the example of Jesus, and living as He did through the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Trust and obey,” the old hymn affirms, “for there’s no other way to be happy in Jesus.” Forming habits of the disciplines is simply obeying the call of Jesus to follow and live for Him. And that obedience produces the joy we crave.

The discipline of celebration is both a natural source and an outcome of this joy. Richard Foster writes:

Celebration is central to all the Spiritual Disciplines. Without a joyful spirit of festivity the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing

tools in the hands of modern Pharisees. Every Discipline should be characterized by carefree [joy] and a sense of thanksgiving (p. 191).

When we celebrate with the joy that comes from becoming increasingly like Jesus, it makes us want to celebrate more.

Celebration gives us the strength to live in all the other Disciplines. When faithfully pursued, the other Disciplines bring us deliverance from those things that have made our lives miserable for years which, in turn, evokes increased celebration. Thus, an unbroken circle of life and power is formed. (Foster, p. 201)

How do we celebrate? In fellowship with other believers. Celebration and fellowship are natural twins. Together, we learn to be more like Jesus and meet each other's needs. In fellowship, we study God's Word and share the fruit of the Spirit. Together we celebrate the amazing things God is doing in our midst.

Israel's annual festivals vividly illustrate God's concern for His people to fellowship and celebrate together (Leviticus 23). Joyful praise and dancing were not uncommon (Exodus 15:20; 2 Samuel 6:14-16; Psalm 68:24-26). The Psalms are full of joyous celebration for almighty God.

Jesus continued these traditions, celebrating the feasts with His fellow Jews. He regularly dined with people in their homes. His first miracle was performed at a wedding (John 2). He rejoices in finding the lost (Luke 15). The three parables in Luke 15 are summed up by celebration over the sinner who repents (v. 7). God has a party when the lost are found. That's a good enough reason for celebration!

Celebration certainly involves fellowship with others, but it should also be a personal attitude in all life's circumstances (Philippians 4:4-7). We can rejoice even in the midst of difficulties.

Celebration and fellowship are about choosing to do what God called the Israelites to do in their festivals, "that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always" (Deuteronomy 14:22-29, NKJV). To fear the Lord means to honor, respect, give reverence to, be in awe of Him. We decide to set our minds on the goodness of God and find ways to rejoice and celebrate Him together for who He is and what He has done.

Fellowship and celebration help us remember and rejoice in almighty God. They help us encourage each other through life's highs and lows. They help us teach and comfort each other in the Spirit as reasons for fellowship and celebration grow.

Apply

1. In your own words, define *celebration* and *fellowship*.
2. What does the Bible teach us about these disciplines? Leviticus 23; Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Nehemiah 8:10; Psalm 136; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Philippians 4:4-7. Does the world, or do other religions, teach anything different?
3. How did Jesus practice celebration and fellowship? What example(s) did He give us to follow, or what commands did He give us to obey? Luke 15; 19.
4. Why is the practice of these disciplines important to our spiritual growth? What do they teach us about God's character? How do they draw us closer to Him?
5. In our character and lifestyle, and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making celebration and fellowship habits? If we don't make them habits?
6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making these disciplines habits in your life?

Ponder

Encouraging one another in practicing the disciplines is important to our spiritual success. This happens best in the context of celebration and fellowship.

What It's All About (Worship)

Read: “In the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our fathers, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you” (1 Chronicles 29:17, 18).

Focus: Worship connects us to God and is the reason for our existence.

Think

My hope is that you've seen a key theme running through these lessons on the disciplines: obedience. Forming these godly habits occurs when we choose to obey our Father's calling, and this assists us in becoming more obedient.

The same is true with our final discipline: worship. Though we can define *worship* in various ways, it refers to bowing down before, honoring, regarding with great reverence, and giving obeisance to the divine.

While worship entails much more, we count it here as a spiritual discipline, for it also involves our spirit and daily walk with God (John 4:23, 24; 2 Peter 1:8). As noted with celebration, practicing the other

disciplines leads us to worship, which in turn assists us in better fulfilling them. It also reminds us that we do not study, meditate, or give *for* God but *with* God. Worship is a relationship with our almighty Father and is the goal of the disciplines.

We were created for worship. Yet because of our sinful nature, too often we have worshipped the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1). Our waywardness prompted God's timeless commandments to have no other gods before Him, to not worship idols, and to not take His name in vain (Exodus 20:3-7).

Jesus calls us back to what singer Matt Redman calls "the heart of worship." He reminds us that worship is all about God, our reverence of Him, and our connection to Him. We must bring Him more than a song or a word or a deed or a thought, but the entirety of our heart and life (Mark 12:30).

In his book *Getting a Handle on Worship*, Elder Whaid Rose uses the HEART acronym to remind us that worship requires (H) humility, (E) emptying ourselves, (A) aligning our hearts with God's heart, (R) repenting from anything and everything that hinders intimate fellowship with Christ, and (T) being transformed by God as we trust in Him.

Worship is displayed and interwoven throughout Holy Scripture: Abraham (Genesis 24:26, 48, 52); Israel (Exodus 4:31; 32:8; 33:10); Moses (Exodus 34:8; Deuteronomy 4:19; 12:31); Joshua (Joshua 5:14); Saul (1 Samuel 15:25-31); David (1 Chronicles 16:29); the Gentile woman (Matthew 15:21-28); and Paul (Acts 17:23-25).

These examples clearly show that we are to worship God and God alone (this includes worship of Jesus, Matthew 21:8, 9). But maybe the more pertinent question is "How do we worship God?" A common misconception is that singing is worship. It certainly can be, but worship is by no means limited to that. When done correctly, any conscious effort to enter into God's presence will lead us into worship. For followers of Jesus, both the hardships and the blessings of life pull us to our knees in worship.

The outward expressions of worship must be motivated and moved by our spirit. It cannot help but draw us into worshipping our Creator, Lord, Savior, and King. Worship is where our temporal world and God's eternal world meet, where the breathtaking wonder of heaven is glimpsed on earth. God be praised!

Apply

1. In your own words, define *worship*.
2. What does the Bible teach us about this discipline? 1 Chronicles 29:17, 18; Exodus 20:3-7; 2 Peter 1:8; Romans 1:18-25. Does the world, or do other religions, attempt to teach anything different?
3. How did Jesus practice worship? What example(s) did He give us to follow, or what commands did He give us to obey? Matthew 15:7-9; Luke 4:7, 8; John 4:20-24; 5:18-23.
4. Why is practicing this discipline important to our spiritual growth? What does it teach us about God's character? How does it draw us closer to Him?
5. In our character and lifestyle and how we share Jesus with others, what are some of the ramifications of making, or not making, worship a habit?
6. What specific steps will you take to begin/increase your efforts in making this discipline a habit in your life?

Ponder

Just as worship begins in holy expectancy, it ends in holy obedience. If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change. . . . To worship is to change (Foster, p. 173).