

# ***The Spiritual Disciplines***

## ***Becoming Spiritually Fit—The Spiritual Disciplines***

You are what you are, but you are not yet what you will be.

[Here in these next sections, like the sections on spiritual gifts, there are but a few quotations that are pertinent, so many of the days ahead will be remiss in that area. This topic is, however, crucial to your spiritual growth and maturity, so we will be addressing it now.]

*Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 NIV*

*For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is. Colossians 2:5 NIV*

To become physically fit, we must exercise, train, and eat right. To become mentally fit, we must read, study, and continually push the boundaries of our minds. To become spiritually fit, we must steadfastly embrace and undertake those activities that will assist us in gaining effectiveness to live a life as Jesus taught and modeled. A spiritually fit and disciplined individual is one who will say and do the right thing at the right time, in the right way, and with the right attitude, intent, and spirit. A spiritually mature individual knows whether laughter, gentleness, silence, healing words, or even righteous indignation are indicated, and they are delivered appropriately, effectively, and lovingly at the proper time.

It may be to your surprise, but there are many spiritual disciplines, of which we've already discussed a few—worship and prayer—but there are almost fifteen in all, and they are quite diverse. We will look at these over the next few days. It is equally important to know and avoid the spiritual pitfalls—becoming spiritually inauthentic like the Pharisees, being judgmental or prideful, becoming less approachable rather than more, believing that you've "spiritually arrived," and being spiritually superficial without a true deep bond with Christ. Pray that God will show you the right tools you need to become like Christ and mirror His life.

## ***The Pinnacle Is Worship***

Worship is the pinnacle of the spiritual disciplines, and everything points to Him.

*Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Matthew 4:10 NIV*

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' Mark 12:30 NIV*

The spiritual disciplines can be broadly categorized as *inward*, *outward*, and *corporate*. The inward disciplines are the ones we are most familiar with and the ones we are most likely to undertake. They are those we use privately to renew our mind and spirit by being quietly in His presence with His Word. They include *worship, prayer, fasting, study, meditation and reflection*, and *a well-ordered heart*. Worship is the true pinnacle of the spiritual disciplines, and as such it encompasses an inward attitude of the heart, an outward expression of our awe of God, and a corporate experience among a group of believers. We have already looked at worship in this devotional during the second week of January, but there are some additional points we will make here.

**Worship.** There is no higher priority as a believer than worship. Our worship must permeate every aspect of our being, and there are avenues that will help us achieve that. First, we must cleanse our hearts and our minds, quiet our activities (both physical and mental), and have a holy expectancy of meeting God—this is the mental avenue into worship. Second, we express our awe and admiration to our God, the only One worthy, through praise, thanksgiving, prayer, singing, music, and even exuberant shouting—this is the vocal avenue into worship. Third, we may, as the Spirit leads us, stand, kneel, bow, lift our hands, lay prostrate, clap, lift our heads upward, and even dance before the Lord in a joyous celebration—this is the physical avenue into worship. The final avenue into worship is tapping into the fullness of your emotional energy—bringing the right attitude, humility, rejoicing, sincere sorrow, repentance, and submission of self to His leading.

Worship is learned best by worshipping. Let go of your agenda, tune out all the distractions and everything around you, and tune in to God—it's all about you alone meeting Him. Worship brings you closer to God like nothing else can.

## ***The Staples Are Prayer and Fasting (Part 1—Basics)***

Prayer should be done regularly. Fasting, in concert with prayer (and meditation and study), should be done to accentuate your spiritual efforts and reap physical benefits as well.

*Prayer is reaching out after the unseen; fasting is letting go of all that is seen and temporal. Fasting helps express, deepen, confirm the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.*

—Andrew Murray

*Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust. Acts 14:23 NIV*

*“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:16–18 NIV*

As worship is the pinnacle of our spiritual disciplines, prayer and fasting are our staples. We will address prayer here briefly, as we have already discussed it in our devotions for the last week of March and the first couple weeks of April, along with spiritual warfare the last week of April.

**Prayer.** Remember, prayer should be done consistently and daily, with the mindset of continually, and it should include praise, thanksgiving, petition, confession, and intercession. Prayer should always be your first choice, not an afterthought, with a focus to gaze on God and glance on your requests. Pray from conviction not from crisis and always pause to listen.

**Fasting.** Fasting is often done in concert with prayer, but it could be used with any of the spiritual disciplines to accentuate and focus your efforts on specific areas of concern. Fasting is often practiced to tear down strongholds, to release the full healing power of God into your life, for spiritual breakthroughs, and for cleansing the soul and spirit, as the fast cleanses the body as well. Fasting is an act of humility and submission to God, allowing for new revelation about your own spiritual condition and to more clearly hear and perceive His guidance and direction. A primary reason for fasting is often for restoration with a renewed holy brokenness and submission to God with a revived determination to follow Him more closely.

Whereas the other inward spiritual disciplines should always be practiced regularly—prayer, study, meditation—fasting is often practiced for those special occasions, purposes, or as led to do so by the Holy Spirit, although some may practice it regularly as well. You must realize that fasting certainly is not starvation, and if you are healthy and fast properly, there are both physical and spiritual benefits gleaned by this cleansing. However, you should always check with your doctor if you have any medical condition such as anemia, diabetes, heart or breathing disorders, or kidney or liver disorders, especially if you are planning to undertake a fast for a couple days or more. Education is critical, and at the end of this devotion, I will provide an excellent resource for more information.

There are four major types of fast: the *normal fast*, the *absolute fast*, the *partial fast*, and the *rotational fast*. The normal fast is abstaining from food for a defined period of time during which only water or juices are ingested. The typical durations are one meal, one day, three days, one week, one month, or yes, even the biblical forty days. The absolute fast is no food and no water or fluids and typically is of short duration for health safety reasons. However, biblically we see the supernatural absolute fast of forty days for Moses, Elijah, and Christ, where without supernatural intervention, death would be likely in this type of extreme extended fast.

The partial fast is one that omits certain foods or is on a schedule that includes limited eating. An example might be eliminating one meal a day or eating only fresh vegetables. Finally, the rotational fast is eating or omitting certain families of food for designated time periods on a rotational basis. An example might be eating lean meat only once a week or certain grains only every few days.

As you can see, fasting is quite a complex science and art and takes much planning and preparation. Over the next few devotions, we will briefly discuss a few more important aspects of fasting, but for great information, here is the most excellent of resources:

Towns, Elmer L. *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough: A Practical Guide to Nine Biblical Fasts*. Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2017.

## ***Prayer and Fasting*** ***(Part 2—Biblical Fasts)***

Fasting is a powerful weapon in your spiritual arsenal. It takes understanding, planning, preparation, and determination. Commitment and dedication bring results.

Your fast should always have a methodology—limited physical activity with a focus on heightened spiritual awareness, a definite set of objectives and plan with proper preparation both mentally and physically, keeping a journal record, and the gradual process and means of breaking the fast and a return to normal eating and activities. Obviously, the longer the fast, the more important and detailed your methodology must be. Additionally, the longer the fast, the more physical changes that your body will undergo.

During extended fasts, the first three days are usually the most difficult as your body adjusts, with many disagreeable symptoms along with hunger, but then the body cycles into a more comfortable zone for a time and then cycles back into a zone of hunger and difficulty again. The more you know and are prepared with proper expectations, the more beneficial the fast will be. It is essential to consult proper and pertinent information on extended fasting before attempting to do so. Elmer Towns's book *Fasting for Spiritual Breakthrough* is a great resource.

From that same book, here are the *nine biblical fasts* described in the Bible:

The *biblical fasting model* is found in Isaiah 58:3–9a (NKJV):

*'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?' 'In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high. Is it a fast that I have chosen, A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, And to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, And an acceptable day to the Lord? 'Is this not the fast that I have chosen: **To loose the bonds of wickedness, To undo the heavy burdens, To let the oppressed go free, And that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; When you see the naked, that you cover him, And not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, Your healing shall spring forth speedily, And your righteousness shall go before you; The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; You shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'***

1. *The Disciple's Fast*: "To loose the bonds of wickedness." Fasting for freedom from addiction or a besetting sin.

*So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Matthew 17:20–21 NKJV*

2. *The Ezra Fast*: "To undo the heavy burdens." Fasting to solve debilitating problems.

*Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, "The hand of our God is upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him." So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer. Ezra 8:21–23 NKJV*

3. *The Samuel Fast: "To let the oppressed go free." Fasting for revival and soul-winning for Christ. So it was that the ark remained in Kirjath Jearim a long time; it was there twenty years. And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, "If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines." And Samuel said, "Gather all Israel to Mizpah, and I will pray to the Lord for you." So they gathered together at Mizpah, drew water, and poured it out before the Lord. And they fasted that day, and said there, "We have sinned against the Lord." And Samuel judged the children of Israel at Mizpah. 1 Samuel 7:2–3, 5–6 NKJV*

Tomorrow we will finish our discussion of the nine biblical fasts. Maybe God is suggesting one for you—one day might make an enormous difference in the direction of your life.

## ***Prayer and Fasting (Biblical Fasts Continued)***

Here are the final biblical fasts from our Scripture model in Isaiah 58:6–9a (NKJV) in yesterday's devotion.

4. *The Elijah Fast: "To break every yoke." Fasting to conquer mental and emotional problems that would otherwise control our lives.*

*Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. 1 Kings 19:2–3, 5–8, 11–12 NKJV*

5. *The Widow's Fast: "To share bread with the hungry and care for the poor." Fasting to provide for the humanitarian needs of others.*

*So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." So she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am*

*gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.’ ”*

1 Kings 17:10–14 NKJV

6. *The Saint Paul Fast:* “To allow God’s light to break forth like the morning.” Fasting for insight and decision-making.

*Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank. And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Acts 9:8–9, 17–19 NKJV*

7. *The Daniel Fast:* “So your healing shall spring forth speedily.” Fasting for good health and physical healing.

*“Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king’s delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.” So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king’s delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Daniel 1:12–17 NKJV*

8. *The John the Baptist Fast:* “Your righteousness shall go before you.” Fasting for an influential testimony to others.

*Now John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Matthew 3:4 NKJV*

*For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. Luke 1:15 NKJV*

9. *The Esther Fast:* “The glory of the Lord would protect us.” Fasting for protection from evil and Satan.

*“Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!” Esther 4:16 NKJV*

As you can see, depending on your spiritual need, you can put together multiple ways to fast and various ways to focus your fast for your desired spiritual and physical result. Even if only done on rare

occasions, the spiritual discipline of fasting, done in concert with prayer and the other disciplines, can truly allow for spiritual breakthroughs.

## ***Prayer and Fasting*** ***(Part 3—Prayer Hinderers)***

If your spiritual reception of God's prayer answers seems amiss, it's time to go through the biblical spiritual wellness checklist for some deep introspection and correction.

*If God answers 'Yes', He is increasing your faith. If 'Wait', He is increasing your patience. If 'No', He has something better for you.*

—Nicky Gumbel

I have saved this discussion about prayer hinderers for this section on spiritual disciplines, for as you become more spiritually aware and mature, it may, on occasion, seem as if your prayers are not being answered or you are not hearing clearly from God. Oftentimes, we simply must be patient and wait, but the Bible also speaks about prayer hinderers, so we should be cognizant of that and diligently check our spiritual wellness too.

Spiritual Wellness Checklist—Prayer Hinderers:

1. Unconfessed Sin. (Your sins are all forgiven, but you should be cognizant and repentant of them.)

*If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and has heard my prayer. Psalm 66:18–19 NIV*

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16 NIV*

2. Unbelief or Lack of Faith. (Double-minded doubt casts us wavering on the waves of the sea instead of standing firmly on the solid Rock.)

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6 NIV*

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do. James 1:5–8 NIV*

*If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." Matthew 21:22 NIV*

3. Disobedience. (Willful disregard for God's Word will bring discipline and the fullness of the consequences of your poor choices.)

*But the Lord said to me, “Tell them, ‘Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.’” So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the Lord’s command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. You came back and wept before the Lord, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you. Deuteronomy 1:42–43, 45 NIV*

*Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 1 John 3:21–23 NIV*

4. Unforgivingness. (With the same measure that you have been forgiven, you are required to forgive others.)

*For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. Matthew 6:14–15 NIV*

*And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” Mark 11:25 NIV*

5. Wrong Motives. (Asking God to satisfy and promote self alone will often be ignored.)

*You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:2–3 NIV*

6. Setting Up Idols. (An idol is anything that takes priority in your life over God.)

*“Son of man, these men have set up idols in their hearts and put wicked stumbling blocks before their faces. Should I let them inquire of me at all? “Therefore say to the people of Israel, ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Repent! Turn from your idols and renounce all your detestable practices! Ezekiel 14:3, 6 NIV*

Tomorrow we will complete our spiritual wellness checklist to make sure that our lives and prayers are not hindered by the blockade of an insincere or superficial self. God wants substance—a deep, mature, sacrificial spiritual wholeness and wellness.

## ***Prayer and Fasting (Prayer Hinderers Continued)***

Here’s the final part of our spiritual wellness checklist. It’s a good thing to check it often and keep yourself in check.

Spiritual Wellness Checklist—Prayer Hinderers (Continued):

7. Neglect of Others. (Ignoring the needs and well-being of others, especially when you have the ability to help them in tangible ways.)

*Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered.*  
Proverbs 21:13 NIV

*For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’ “They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’ “He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’”* Matthew 25:42–45 NIV

8. Disregard for God’s Word or Sovereignty. (A prideful attitude putting your knowledge and self-appraisal equal to that of God.)

*If anyone turns a deaf ear to my instruction, even their prayers are detestable. Whoever leads the upright along an evil path will fall into their own trap,* Proverbs 28:9–10a NIV

*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.* Isaiah 5:21 NIV

*those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth; those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful;* Proverbs 30:12–13 NIV

9. Unsurrendered Will/Stubbornness. (Knowing but resisting, or an unwillingness to change or do the right things that you know you should do.)

*“But they refused to pay attention; stubbornly they turned their backs and covered their ears. They made their hearts as hard as flint and would not listen to the law or to the words that the Lord Almighty had sent by his Spirit through the earlier prophets. So the Lord Almighty was very angry. “When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen,” says the Lord Almighty.* Zechariah 7:11–13 NIV

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Psalm 139:23–24 NIV

10. Not Honoring One Another. (Our interpersonal relationships are important to God—how we relate to Him, those closest to us, and all humanity.)

*Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”*  
1 Peter 3:4–5, 7–9, 12 NIV

11. Indifference. (A flippant, uncaring, nonchalant attitude gets you precisely what you give.)

*But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. “Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord. Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; Proverbs 1:24–32 NIV*

12. Impatience. (We are called to patient perseverance and to wait on His timing—God is never late or wrong.)

*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Psalm 37:7 NIV*

*Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. Isaiah 64:4 NIV*

*But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Romans 8:25 NIV*

We ourselves are the greatest obstacle to what God has for us and in hearing His voice clearly. We need to do a spiritual checkup often and objectively—our connection with Him and experiencing the fullness of what He has for us demands it.

## ***Study—The Spiritual Discipline (Part 1—Learning to Study)***

“The mind is a terrible thing to waste.” It’s time to learn how to study what’s important.

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16–17 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. Romans 12:2 NIV*

*Finally, brothers and sisters, 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. Philippians 4:8 NIV*

*Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32 NIV*

**Study.** There is nothing more powerful than the mind and our good control of it. That's why the spiritual discipline of study, and especially of reading God's Word, is so crucial to becoming spiritually mature. We have already looked at the above Scriptures before in this devotional, but I have included them here again because of their supreme importance in the transformation of the mind, taking every thought captive to be obedient to the mind of Christ, being washed and cleansed with the Word, and imparting and ingraining those thoughts indelibly forever into our minds. That's what study is all about. Our minds take on a specialized order which conforms to that which it concentrates on. Ingrained habits of thought form by our perceptions, concentrations, and repetition of thought processes. Therefore, we study to properly form and retain beneficial habits of thought.

There are "two books" that we study—the *verbal or written book* (such as the Bible or hearing a lecture) and the *nonverbal book*. We will first look at the verbal, written book and the four steps in learning how to study. The first step is *repetition*—ingrained habits of thought can be formed by repetition alone, without even fully understanding the information. The second step is *concentration*—focusing your attention and faculties on a particular section of the book without distraction. The third step is *comprehension*—fully understanding and knowing the truth. This leads us into insight and discernment, providing the basis for a true perception of reality. And finally, the fourth step is *reflection*—this brings us to the significance of what we have learned and its subsequent application in our lives.

The practice of studying and being a good learner demands humility and a willingness to spend the necessary time to implement all the required steps and embrace the topic as one which has the power to positively influence and transform the thoughts, behaviors, and habits of your mind. As in everything else, you must learn to study and practice it often to keep the mental processes sharp and aligned. We all learn in varied ways, so practice what is most effective for you, whether it be taking notes, highlighting key words or phrases, visualizing, or just continually mulling it over and over in your mind to solidify those neural pathways. Study to learn, and learn for understanding, application, and transformation.

Tomorrow we will look at some rules for how to best read a book and comprehending the nonverbal book of the world around us.

## **Study** **(Part 2—Reading and Perceiving)**

Sure, you know how to read. But are you reading with a method? Read with purpose and purpose to read.

*I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens.  
What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind! Ecclesiastes 1:13 NIV*

*They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. They stood where they were and read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for a quarter of the day, and spent another quarter in confession and in worshiping the Lord their God. Nehemiah 8:8; 9:3 NIV*

*You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. John 5:39–40 NIV*

*Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.* 1 Timothy 4:13 NIV

Reading any nonfiction book should be undertaken with a purpose and methodology employed. There are three *intrinsic* rules and three *extrinsic* rules that you should always follow. The first intrinsic rule is to *understand* what you're reading—what is the author saying? No more and no less. Secondly, we need to properly *interpret* the information in its proper context—what does the author mean? No more and no less. The third and final intrinsic rule is to *evaluate* the information—has the author been clear and precise? Does the information appear to be logical and reasonable? Is there additional information elsewhere (within the text and other sources) to solidify the assertions and conclusions of the author? Is the author a reputable and reliable source, and do you believe the information to be true, or do you disagree?

After you have gone through the three intrinsic rules in their order, then you need to follow the three extrinsic rules for final evaluation and confirmation of the information. The first extrinsic rule is *experience*—does what we have read confirm or contradict what we know from our already ingrained knowledge base and life experiences? This takes much discernment, for if we are starting with the wrong ingrained information, it takes exponentially more information to counteract and replace that wrong information with the correct information. Obviously, it is much easier if you learn correct information initially than if you've been told wrong, learned wrong, and currently are thinking wrong. And the longer those incorrect ingrained patterns of thinking have been there, the harder they are to correct into the truth.

The second extrinsic rule is to *read other books and information* on the same topic—the more information you can gather and assimilate, the more likely you are to end up with the most likely correct mode of thinking. Yet this too can often be flawed and lead you astray. You must pick your sources wisely and sometimes you need to search and think outside of the standard. The conventional mode of thinking does not always make it right, and new information always sheds new light on what we formerly understood. Finally, *live discussion* with others brings varied and often unique viewpoints to bear on the subject and can be a means to reevaluate your own thoughts. Once you are certain about the information, then it is time to solidify it in your mind and begin the application of the information, including any transformation that should entail.

We have discussed the verbal or written book, and lastly, we will now briefly look at the nonverbal book, which is the entire world around us. This may be the least recognized but possibly the most important source of information. It entails the true observation of reality in people, nature, events, and actions. God's created order of things speaks volumes if we will intently observe. It requires a reverent observation first, and second, to love what you sense. Do so, and you will certainly learn from all that you take in.

As you spiritually mature, one of the most important areas of study should become the study of yourself. You should continually be studying and evaluating your relationship with God and others, the things that control you, your emotions toward yourself and others and why, your likes and dislikes and why, your strengths and weaknesses, how you can become the most effective and productive, and what all this teaches about yourself. Knowing yourself better will help you to know and understand God better, and vice versa.

## ***Meditation***

Study to learn. Meditate to change. It's all about applying God's Word and principles to your life.

*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight,  
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer. Psalm 19:14 NIV*

**Meditation/Reflection.** It is important for us to first understand that Christian meditation is not like any Eastern religion meditation. We are not putting ourselves into a trance or chanting or following a mantra order or citing incantations, nor are we trying to lose our individuality and escape this world and become one with nature or the universe or a higher order being. Christian meditation has one purpose—to quiet ourselves to meet God, usually within the Scriptures. It should be as if Jesus is right there saying, “I wrote these words just for you. Here is where you are. Here is where you need to change. Here is where I want you to be.” Superficially, some of the outward aspects of the meditation process may look similar, but the goal is always to meet God and bring about positive transformation in yourself to become more like Jesus.

The disciplines of meditation and study somewhat overlap, as both are focusing intently on the Scriptures. However, during study, you are being analytical—reading for information and knowledge. In meditation, you are being devotional—reading for personal application and transformation by devoting, dedicating, and consecrating yourself to God. Through meditation, you are reading or listening intently to God’s Word, reflecting on God’s works, rehearsing God’s deeds, and ruminating on God’s law. A repentant and obedient heart is essential in the meditation process. The goal is to wash yourself clean and fresh with the artesian well of God’s Word to flush and remove as much of the world and as much of yourself as you can and replace it with the living water of Christ.

For best results, preparation for meditation is key. You need a quiet time, a quiet place, and position yourself in a comfortable posture with your Bible and favorite devotional to help bring you into God’s presence. You may also want to have a journal handy to write things down as God speaks to you. Pray before you start that God would indeed meet you and speak clearly to you and have an eager expectation that He will. In meditation, you are centering the attention of your entire essence—body, soul, and spirit—focusing all that you are on the glory of God and the face of Jesus. Begin by reading a selected passage of Scripture or devotion for the day with an open mind and heart, a surrendered will, and make the words personally applicable to you. Concentrate on and absorb the words and let them resonate in your heart. This is not about how much you read; it’s about how it affects you—the goal is not to get through the Scriptures but to get the Scriptures in you.

Finally, take at least one thought or one verse of Scripture or a gold nugget that the Holy Spirit revealed to you throughout the day or into the next day and contemplate on it. Sustained attention is crucial. Likewise, when reading Scripture, you may discover that reading it out loud is helpful for full assimilation by allowing both visual and auditory inputs to receive it. Repetition means retention. Make it a part of your memory. Memorization is powerful because the neural pathways are ingrained and easily accessed and retrieved. As a final note, I would encourage you to memorize key Scriptures, and I would certainly do so using the New King James Version of the Bible. The reason is that this version is most conducive to memorization because of its melodious tempo and memorable word usage. The other versions are excellent for study but not so easy to remember word for word.

### ***“Centering Down”—A Meditation Technique***

Let your body posture reflect your mental and spiritual attitude as you meet God in your meditation. It’s best to have a humble heart, an attentive soul, and a quiet spirit.

*Those who draw water from the wellspring of meditation know that God dwells close to their hearts.*

—Toyohiko Kagawa

*If by meditation, thou does not find an increase in all thy graces, and do not grow beyond the stature of common Christians, and art not made more serviceable in thy place, and more precious in the eyes of all discerning persons; if thy soul enjoys not more communion with God, and thy life be not fuller of comfort, and hast it not readier by thee at a dying hour; then cast away these directions, and exclaim against me forever as a deceiver.*

—Richard Baxter

*I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live. May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord. Psalm 104:33–34 NIV*

Meditation, like worship, incorporates our physical being as well as our soul and spirit. Just as we lift our hands and sing in praise, we quiet ourselves in humble submission in meditation. In fact, meditation could incorporate worship, prayer, and fasting all together as part of the spiritual experience. Furthermore, it can be helpful to physically position and prepare our body language in a physical attitude to more easily enable the mental and spiritual attitudes to ensue. With that said, here I offer a technique that has been used by Quakers and other Christian groups to help set your meditation attitude.

This technique is simply called “centering down” as a means to let your body reflect what your heart and mind desire. You are centering your entire essence to focus and be attentive to the Holy Spirit, and you are laying all your sin and burdens down, in eager anticipation to receive renewal, restoration, and direction from God. Sometimes, this technique is called “palms down/palms up” and is a good way to start your meditation.

Begin by sitting quiet and comfortably and place your hands out in front of you, palms down. Pray, and as you are symbolically dropping, releasing, surrendering, and turning over every sin and concern to God, pray that it be so. You may even want to end that part by saying, “Palms down, Lord, I release it all to you.” After a few moments, then turn your palms up as a symbol to receive, replace, and restore your connection and commitment to God, and pray for your needs and listen intently to His reply and direction. Again, you may want to audibly say, “Palms up, Lord, I receive it all from you.” Be still and silent for a few moments to listen intently to His Divine Whisper speaking and be obedient to all that you hear or impressions that you spiritually sense. Then methodically read your daily devotion or Scripture verse to meditate on and complete your time with prayer and a bit of worship with a heartfelt thank you.

Obviously, there are any number of ways to accomplish a great session of meditation. I personally like crossing my arms over my heart in release and surrender and then holding my arms outward with palms up to receive. The physical symbolism helps to keep the mind and spirit in close touch with Him—and that’s the whole point of the exercise. Do what works best for you.

## ***A Well-Ordered Heart***

God wants your life to be the best. It requires implementing an action plan and developing a well-ordered heart.

*Employ your time in improving yourself by other men’s writings so that you shall come easily by what others have labored hard for.*

—Socrates

*It is not the busy skimming over religious books or the careless hastening through religious duties which makes for a strong Christian faith. Rather, it is unhurried meditation on the gospel truths and the exposing of our minds to these truths that yield the fruit of a sanctified character.*

—Maurice Roberts

*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:17 NIV*

**A Well-Ordered Heart.** This is the last of the inward spiritual disciplines that we will discuss. A *well-ordered heart* is one that strives to lead a life of purity in thought, word, and deed and seeks to develop a “rule of life” that goes beyond a simple balance. Balance often carries the notion of more manageable, more convenient, and more pleasant, but not necessarily well-ordered. Well-ordered is the mission statement that God has for your life and the means to get there.

A well-ordered heart recognizes that our inherent problem comes from within—we truly are often our own worst enemy. The underlying life rule that the well-ordered heart should follow is this: to love the right things to the right degree in the right way, with the right kind of love (remember agape?). When our heart is well-ordered, we are not only increasingly free from sin, we are also increasingly free from the desire to sin. Developing a well-ordered heart requires a plan of action for all areas of your life, and it needs to be continually implemented and fine-tuned. It will not just happen without intentional commitment and reorganization of priorities and a dedication to overseeing that the process is moving progressively along on God’s directed path.

Your rule of life should have at its center the inclusion of God and His presence in every aspect of your daily existence. You must develop strategies, priorities, objectives, and goals intentionally to produce a new spiritual awareness and closeness with Him and allow Him to speak life into every area of your life. Try to keep your plan simple, practical, workable, and write it down and follow it diligently. It should include priority setting for prayer time, Bible time (both study and meditation), relationship-building and growth, workplace ethics and character, your service unto the Lord, recreation time, fulfilling your call and life mission, and putting your finances in order—including plans to get out of debt, stay out of debt, budgeting and priority spending, giving unto the Lord, saving and investing for college or retirement or the future, life and health insurance, and the ever-important last will and testament.

God wants every aspect of your life to be well-ordered—the physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual. Seek His help and the help of trusted professionals to take you where God wants you to be—with a well-ordered heart and a rule of life action plan.

## ***The Summit Is Servanthood***

The Cross is the symbol of Christianity and Christ’s sacrifice for us. The towel is the symbol of servanthood as Christ’s example set for us.

*Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set*

*you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. John 13:3–5, 13–17 NIV*

We have discussed the six inward spiritual disciplines—worship (which is really inward, outward, and corporate), prayer, fasting, study, meditation, and a well-ordered heart—and these should be practiced regularly to bring about the spiritual maturity and transformation that God wants to observe in our lives. The outward spiritual disciplines are the observed outflow of what the inward transformation has brought about. If we have not begun to master the inward disciplines and master ourselves, we will have difficulty mastering the outward spiritual disciplines—and many of these directly relate to our relationships and attitudes toward God and all mankind.

The six outward spiritual disciplines are the six S's that bring success—*servanthood, submission, simplicity, secrecy, solitude, and suffering*. Yes, I know that doesn't sound like success, nor do those seem attractive to undertake. But remember, God's kingdom is an upside-down kingdom, and I assure you that there are gold nuggets of spirituality to be gleaned and practiced from all those disciplines.

**Servanthood.** Before we get into servanthood, let's compare and contrast true service unto the Lord versus self-righteous service. Self-righteous service is calculated through human effort alone, is impressed with the "big deal," requires external rewards and appreciation, is highly concerned about results, picks and chooses whom and when to serve, is fleeting and temporary, and undermines community while glorifying self. True service unto the Lord flows out of our relationship with Jesus where no service is too small. It is content with its hiddenness and the Divine nod of approval. It is free from the need to calculate results, serves enemies as well as friends, serves whenever there is a need, is a true lifestyle, and builds community while glorifying God.

Now, before you get comfortable, let's take it one step further and deeper. There is also an inherent difference between choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant. When we choose to serve, we are still "in charge," and may be concerned that another may take charge over us. Choosing to be a servant means we knowingly and willingly give up the right to be "in charge," and hence are not concerned about anyone else that may be over us, as we are focused simply on serving. A servant surrenders their right to be in charge and, hence, has great freedom and no entangling concerns. Therefore, as we shall see, servanthood is not simply doing acts of service and outwardly portraying a servant, it is the mindset and attitude of being fully a servant inwardly first, with the corresponding outward display, second. One can master the mechanics of service without the true heart, mind, and spirit that is characterized by the servant that Jesus portrayed.

## ***A Life of True Servanthood***

Grab your towel. Follow the way of the Cross. It's time to live the life of a true servant—appropriate smallness that packs a powerful punch.

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue*

*acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* Philippians 2:5–11  
NIV

The practice of the spiritual discipline of servanthood, or better still, the lifestyle of servanthood, is one of “appropriate smallness.” Here are ten key points that characterize a life of true servanthood following in the example that Christ has set before us.

**Hiddenness**—is the truest measure of humility, serving concealed without expectation of reward or acknowledgement, and not being troubled when slighted or undervalued. This is a state of mind that does wonders to combat the flesh and subdue pride, for you look not to the world but solely to God for your strength and recognition. See Matthew 6:1–4.

**Ministry of the mundane**—is the simple assistance in small, trifling, external matters and seemingly insignificant tasks. Large tasks may require great effort for a moment, but small things often require a continual sacrifice. Be faithful in the few and small things, and God will surely enlarge your realm of influence to the many and most important things. See Matthew 25:21.

**Ministry of holding your tongue**—is knowing when nothing said is better than divulging all your knowledge and by guarding the reputation of others and refusing to gossip. Speak no evil—the tongue is a most powerful and dangerous weapon and true honorable and noble character is displayed when the tongue is held in check. See James 3:5–10.

**Ministry of being interrupted**—allowing yourself to be available and interrupted, even at inopportune times, is a hallmark of the true willingness to be a servant. On numerous occasions in the Gospels, Jesus was stopped to heal, teach, address issues and such, and was always willing to meet the need at that time.

**Acts of courtesy**—simple words and acts of common courtesy and compassion displays the acknowledgement of others and affirms their worth. Putting others first in these simple things goes a long way in keeping both your humility and their self-esteem vibrant.

**Hospitality**—opening our home and being the best host, looking after the needs and providing joy for others can bring a deep satisfaction and joy back to us. A true servant reaps great joy by serving and seeing others blessed by it. Mary and Martha were frequent hosts of Jesus and His disciples.

**Bearing**—empathizing with and bearing the pain and suffering of others shows the true love of Christ. Sometimes, weeping with someone is better than words. We are also called to bear with and be patient and merciful toward those who are downcast. See Galatians 6:2 and 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.

**Listening**—this can be one of the most effective and powerful acts of service that one can perform. Listening with compassion and patience allows the hearer to quiet and discipline the mind in attentiveness, while allowing the speaker to vocalize and release pent-up anguish and pain. Being an attentive listener to others helps us become more attentive listeners toward God.

**Being served**—surprisingly, perhaps, part of being a good servant is allowing yourself to be served, and graciously yielding self and submitting to the service of others in mutual honor and respect without feeling the need to repay it. Peter did not want Jesus to wash his feet, but the Lord’s reply was, “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me” (John 13:8).

**Sharing the word of life**—no one person can ever hear and know everything that God has for us and wants to say to us. We are dependent upon each other to hear and know the full counsel of God, and God may use one considered the least of us to make a most profound observation or statement to one considered the greatest of us. God even spoke through Balaam’s donkey (Numbers 22:21–35).

We leave our discussion of servanthood with a quote for you to digest and ponder:

*A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.*

*A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.*

—Martin Luther

## ***Submission Is Self-Denial***

The towel is the symbol of servanthood. The cross is the symbol of submission and self-denial.

*Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. Mark 8:34 NIV*

*Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Romans 13:1–7 NIV*

First, let us identify what submission is not. Submission is not willingly subjecting yourself to oppression of any kind, nor is it willingly tolerating or living with abuse in any form, nor allowing yourself to be taken unfair advantage of. Those are unhealthy relationships that need to be either resolved or terminated. True submission is a willful act with ultimate spiritual benefits to be reaped.

**Submission.** To be a true servant, one must also be able to be submissive, as they are flip sides of the same coin. Submission means to willingly lay down our agenda and stubborn self-will to embrace God's plan and direction for our lives in obedience. It is a genuine attitude of subordination in the context that we consider, value, and respect each other, just as Christ displayed in His life.

The primary characteristic of submission is a willful self-denial to allow us freedom to give away to others and to hold other's interests in high esteem. Self-denial is not self-contempt. Self-denial is a healthy attitude and action that counteracts both self-pity and self-indulgence—knowing that our current sacrifices are for our greater good and the good of others. Self-denial is truly taking up your cross daily and following in the footsteps of Jesus. There is no better way to mirror His life of sacrifice, which ultimately brought Him the highest of power and victory.

In leadership, the highest point of power and influence is found in servanthood and submission by using sparingly your position and voluntarily putting others first. It is not your position that wields power and respect; it is your person that does so. When you learn that and can implement that into your everyday experiences, great will be the rewards you will reap both here and in heaven. The hierarchy of submission in your life should be as follows: God, Scripture, the family order (husband/wife/children), fellow believers, our neighbors and the downtrodden in need, and then the community and government at large. Submission should never be undertaken to a point of unhealthiness or to any point that would contradict the Word of God.

As a final note, one must always remember that spiritual authority is God-ordained and God-sustained, regardless if human institutions acknowledge this or not. A position of authority does not necessarily give you spiritual authority, and true authority is marked by both a real power with heartfelt compassion. It's time to take up your cross.

## ***Blissful Simplicity***

Less can truly be more, with less stress and a greater focus on the important and the essential.

*Blissful are the simple, for they shall have much peace.*

—Thomas à Kempis

*“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Matthew 6:19–21 NIV*

You don't have to be Amish or the member of a traditionalist Christian group to appreciate and practice the spiritual discipline of simplicity. Less can be gain when you align your heart and treasure with God.

**Simplicity.** The spiritual discipline of simplicity is one that most of us might outwardly reject, yet you do not need to be the “mountain man” nor live the Amish lifestyle to put into practice many of the principles of simplicity. In fact, you might find them quite appealing, practical, and freeing. Simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle, and both are essential to the discipline. It is, most assuredly, getting back to the basics and essentials in life, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The objective is to wage war on, and eliminate, everything which may serve to interfere with your primary allegiance to God. Possessions are most notable in this regard, so the focus is typically on the proper perspective of possessions and a total trust and reliance upon God.

Here are the three essential internal attitudes which must first be made concrete in the heart and mind before the outward expression of simplicity can be made manifest. First, an inherent understanding that everything we have we receive from God as a gift. It comes not by our own hands but only through God's grace. Second, the faith and trust that everything we have is in God's care, and it can be as easily removed as it is given. Third, the belief and mindset that everything we have should be made available to others to share, loan, or give away if that need in them arises.

We worry and cling to possessions as if our life depended upon them, but our Father knows what we need and will assuredly supply that need and more (Matthew 6:25–34). Do you own your possessions, or do they own you? Who is the servant, and who is the master? You must ask yourself these tough questions and resolve to make life changes. Embracing the practice of simplicity can do wonders to help alleviate stress, worry, and anxiety.

Tomorrow we will look at ten ways that you can employ the practice of simplicity in your life.

## ***Manifesting Simplicity in Your Life***

High maintenance or simplicity? Which lifestyle describes you? Anxiety, worry, and stress or a calm peace and freedom—your choices make a difference.

Ten principles for the outward expression of simplicity:

1. Purchase items for their usefulness rather than their status. Base your purchases on practicality, functionality, and need.
2. Reject anything that may produce a compulsion of excess in your life and keep you in bondage. This would include any purchases that may enable an obsession or addiction or anything that is difficult for you to control or say no to. You may need professional help to assist you in these matters.
3. Develop a healthy habit of giving things away. Do not accumulate unnecessary things and do not become too attached to any one thing. Declutter and decrease everything but the essentials.
4. Refuse to be propagandized by the custodians of modern gadgetry. It will wear out and rarely do these devices ever save us time. Technology sometimes takes up more of our time rather than freeing us. You must be wise in these areas.
5. Do not be obsessed with owning everything. Learn to utilize things by borrowing, sharing, or having friends help or hire help. Control is an illusion and deceptive. Here is the general formula to remember: Possessions = Maintenance = Bondage in time and money.
6. Develop a deeper appreciation for God's creation, get closer to nature and more agrarian. Having even a small garden is a lot of work, but the benefits can be tremendous in many respects. Obviously, those who live in rural areas will have a much easier time accomplishing this.
7. Avoid buying on credit as much as possible. Spend only what you have and make sure plans are in place for saving, emergencies, and getting out of debt. Smart money management is key in controlling stress, worry, and anxiety. You may need professional help here too.
8. Make honesty and integrity the distinguishing characteristics of your speech and actions. Let yes be yes and no be no, without ambiguity or being political. Keeping your mind clear brings an inner peace.
9. Reject the purchase of anything that would breed the oppression of others, such as forced labor or child labor or any unhealthy working conditions. Let your purchases and support reflect the highest of ethics.
10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God. This could include possessions, a job, a position or title, status, unhealthy relationships—anything that vies to take first place in your life besides God.

As you can see, many of these simplicity principles we can all easily incorporate into our lives. It takes an attitude adjustment and a heartfelt determination, but benefits can be reaped not only spiritually, but also mentally, emotionally, and physically. It's time to get simple.

## ***Secrecy—Combating Approval Addiction***

Always remember Who you're serving and why you're here. He's the One who matters most.

*"Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. "So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the*

*streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:1–4 NIV*

*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Colossians 3:23–24 NIV*

We all desire and need a certain amount of healthy affirmation and encouragement from our family, friends, and peers. Approval and the accolades of men are nice perks to affirm and reassure us that we are doing things well. Yet, taken to an extreme, the constant requirement for positive reinforcement from those we deem most important can be quite detrimental to our well-being. That is what we call “approval addiction,” and our own personal validation of other’s opinions toward us gives their approval or disapproval credibility, and we judge ourselves accordingly. Becoming a spiritually mature Christian means refusing to allow other people’s opinions about ourselves to dominate or control our lives.

**Secrecy.** The spiritual discipline of secrecy, like simplicity, is first an inward attitude with an outward expression. We should always receive praise or a poor review gracefully, cordially, and humbly, but always realizing that in the final analysis, it is not men we are working for nor the praise of men that we are striving for, but the recognition of the Lord with a “well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21, 23).

The practice of secrecy is the outward expression of that healthy attitude by serving, giving, or providing assistance to others, as if unto the Lord and the Lord alone, done without divulging your identity or expecting any acknowledgement from men in any way. It is precisely what it says—done in secret. Your Father in heaven sees all and knows all and most assuredly will reward you for your good deeds, even in the supplying of a cup of water to those who are least (Matthew 10:42). There is no need to toot your horn—let the Lord sound His own trumpet for you. This obviously requires a great deal of healthy confidence, assurance, self-esteem, and spiritual maturity. It is one of the most difficult of the spiritual disciplines to master and requires a well-ordered heart.

Here are three danger signs that a healthy reception of praise or criticism from men has turned into borderline approval addiction.

**Comparison**—constantly gauging and measuring your accomplishments against those of others, even though you truly never know all the circumstances. Since we never know all the details surrounding the apparent accomplishments of others, it is equally impossible to make any valid comparison and it becomes an exercise in futility. You are a unique you. God has a special plan precisely for you, and everything changes with time.

**Deception**—when our concern for what others think becomes overriding, we will shade the truth and make excuses for ourselves when we don’t meet their expectations. Just be honest—if you believe the criticism to be correct, own it and let it propel yourself to be better. If you believe the criticism to be in error, acknowledge their observation, hold your tongue, and reject it in your heart unless the Holy Spirit tells you otherwise.

**Resentment**—when we crave approval in excess, we inevitably come to resent those whose approval we seek. We transfer our own frustration onto others and make it their problem and fault. This is a difficult pit to get out of and is self-destructive. Always acknowledge, pray about what’s been said or not said, and look to the Lord your Master for His answers.

## ***The Serenity of Solitude Is Not Lonely***

It's hard to hear God through the clanging cymbals of this world and the beating drums in your brain. You need a mental and physical place and time of respite and solace.

*Our language has wisely sensed the two sides of being alone. It has created the word "loneliness" to express the pain of being alone. And it has created the word "solitude" to express the glory of being alone.*  
—Paul Tillich

*True religion disposes persons to be much alone in solitary places for holy meditation and prayer.*  
—Jonathan Edwards

*There are many who live in the mountains and behave as if they were in the town, and they are wasting their time. It is possible to be a solitary in one's mind while living in a crowd, and it is possible for one who is a solitary to live in the crowd of his own thoughts.*  
—Amma Syncletica

*When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. Matthew 14:13 NIV*

*Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35 NIV*

*But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. Luke 5:16 NIV*

**Solitude.** The spiritual discipline of solitude is not being alone and lonely. It is a willful choice to mentally and/or physically escape not only the busyness and clutter of the world around us, but of our own mind's clutter too. We all suffer somewhat from "hurry sickness," especially in today's high-tech world, where we constantly try to accomplish more in progressively diminishing available time. The greatest danger in this is that we become so distracted, rushed, and preoccupied with the busyness that we settle for a mediocre spirituality and faith or very little at all. This is a choice of priorities that each of us must make. Busyness does not equate to a higher quality of life or productivity; in fact, it is often detrimental to our entire well-being.

The practice of solitude begins with a state of mind that cultivates a silence and a patient and peaceful slowing—a place in the mind, if you will, where you can meet God with a serenity and tranquility at a moment's notice. The more you can frequent this place in the mind, the greater the benefits of having calm in the midst of the storm and of hearing the still small voice of the Divine Whisper. Solitude is about being still in the presence of the Lord and listening intently to what He has to say.

It is also helpful to have a place of solitude to escape the busyness with quiet prayer and meditation, just as Jesus so often did. If God-in-the-flesh deemed it so important to escape the crowds and be alone with the Father, how much more important do you think that is for us? Solitude is also a time of quiet rest, a collection of your thoughts, and reflection upon past, present, and future. It's a time to strengthen inner peace, reaffirm His direction for your life, and refocus your energies. Times of solitude can be moments, hours, days, or sabbaticals, whichever fits the current need best. But brief moments should be practiced routinely. Approach solitude like the requirement for sleep—without it, you would soon succumb and cease to exist.

## ***Suffering—Patient Endurance to Persevere***

This is the one spiritual discipline that you don't have to actively seek and practice, for it will find you. The question is, "Is your heart and spirit ready?"

*Although the world is full of suffering, it is full also of the overcoming of it.*

—Helen Keller

*It is by those who have suffered that the world has been advanced.*

—Leo Tolstoy

*Jesus has many who love his kingdom in heaven, but few who bear his cross. He has many who desire comfort, but few who desire suffering. He finds many to share his feast, but few his fasting. All desire to rejoice with him, but few are willing to suffer for his sake. Many follow Jesus to the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the cup of his passion. Many admire the miracles but few follow him to the humiliation of his cross. Many love Jesus as long as no hardship touches them.*

—Thomas à Kempis

*Christ himself came down and took possession of me . . . I had never foreseen the possibility of that, of a real contact, person to person, here below, between a human being and God . . . in this sudden possession of me by Christ, neither my sense nor my imagination had any part: I only felt in the midst of my suffering the presence of a love.*

—Simone Weil

*A clay pot sitting in the sun will always be a clay pot. It has to go through the white heat of the furnace to become porcelain.*

—Mildred W. Struven

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. James 1:2–4 NIV*

*In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 1 Peter 1:6–7 NIV*

*Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. Romans 5:3–5 NIV*

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in*

*any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort. 2 Corinthians 1:3–7 NIV*

**Suffering.** Few of us would ever consider suffering to be a spiritual discipline. Yet the tragic irony of suffering is that it is probably the most powerful and most effective, although least desirable, means to propel us into spiritual maturity and becoming spiritually disciplined. Tragedies in our lives can also bring about important positive changes in our attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyle. Suffering will come. It is a matter of dealing with it appropriately that will either allow us to eventually move forward better or be stuck forever in bitterness, pessimism, and skepticism.

All tragedies and suffering must appropriately be grieved and dealt with, and only time, friends and family, professionals, and God Himself can bring about the required healing and mending. With God on our side, and His Word in our heart, we can persevere and overcome trials and tribulations and allow those events to change, mold, and shape us in positive ways to become better, stronger, more mature, and more complete. It is our choice in how we approach these events in our lives, and we usually can't do this on our own. Nothing can ever fully prepare us, but a strong faith and disciplined heart and mind empowered by His Spirit will surely make the arduous journey easier.

## ***Confession***

A truly repentant heart brings a timely confession with God's full loving forgiveness assured.

*Admission of wrongdoing is not an admission of weakness, but a sign of strength.*

—Author Unknown

*We must lay before Him what is in us, not what ought to be in us.*

—C. S. Lewis

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 NIV*

*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, Romans 8:1 NIV*

*And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:15–16 NIV*

We have completed our discussions of the inward and outward spiritual disciplines and now we will look at the last three disciplines, the corporate spiritual disciplines—*confession, guidance, and celebration*. The corporate spiritual disciplines are those which you would undertake with a trusted spiritual companion or in group settings.

**Confession.** The spiritual discipline of confession is both inward, directed to God Himself, and corporate, when you are prompted by the Holy Spirit to confess a sin directly to a person you've wronged or to another trusted spiritual mentor, such as a pastor. Likewise, you yourself may be a trusted spiritual mentor, and others may desire to confess their sins to you as a confidant.

Confession is one of the most important things that we must continually do to live life beyond regret. It is both healing and cleansing and helps us to focus on what's right and to turn from that which is contrary to God's Word. It also serves to keep our relationships viable and is a reflection of our honesty, integrity, and noble character. Remember, we are all the worst of sinners and there is none righteous, so we are all in this equally together, especially in God's eyes. Also, since all sin is rebellion against God, we should always be repentant and confess our sins to Him first and acknowledge and be assured of His forgiveness for us. There is no sin that cannot be forgiven by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross and the blood He shed—He did not die in vain, for every sin is covered.

The next most important step we should take is confessing a sin directly to someone we've wronged and ask them for forgiveness and seek reconciliation. This releases the burden from us and cleans the slate, provided that we are truly remorseful and seek to make amends. If the person you've wronged is not receptive, then so be it for the time, as you have done your due diligent part, and the rest is on them, not you. If you have done and said all that the Holy Spirit has prompted, but still have a heavy heart, you may need to confess the sin to a trusted confidant. Pray about who to seek out in this matter and let God's Spirit direct you. The individual must be a trusted confidant, spiritually mature and wise, compassionate, knowledgeable, understanding, upholding the highest of integrity, and be open and approachable. This person could be your pastor, another pastor, or anyone who fits those criteria.

Tomorrow we will look at the two aspects of confession—confessing your sin to a trusted confidant and, conversely, someone confessing their sin to you as their confidant.

## ***Giving a Confession/Receiving a Confession***

God's love, forgiveness, healing, and being able to move on—that's what confession should bring.

You may occasionally find yourself in the predicament of a heavy heart that feels burdened to confess a sin to a trusted individual. Perhaps you are unable to contact a person you've wronged or perhaps that person is unwilling and unreceptive to any discussion. Here are some steps to help guide you in the proper direction to release your burden.

### ***Giving a Confession:***

**Preparation.** You should always take it to God first and fully accept His forgiveness and assurance, and if you are led to confess the wrongdoing to another person, prayerfully seek God's direction. You are always secure in Christ.

**Self-examination.** Seek, find, and reflect upon what the Holy Spirit is guiding you specifically to do to resolve the burden in your heart.

**Perception.** All sin involves denial, and you must fully understand, embrace, and overcome that. Sin, by its very presence, seeks to hide itself and distort the truth. We must spiritually perceive sin through the eyes of God and the one we've wronged. This is all about fixing you, not fixing the other person.

*You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Matthew 7:5 NIV*

Ask the *why* and *what*—ponder how the sin came about and its effects on you and others. Oftentimes, sin is tied to underlying unmet needs, unresolved issues, or wrong attitudes or perceptions. All these must be addressed appropriately, or we will inevitably continue down the same cycle of sin.

True sorrow. Essential to repentance, this is the motivating force to cease from those negative actions or behaviors. True sorrow means taking on the pain of the one wronged and of God that resulted from your actions.

Determination to avoid sin. This must take place by the changing of attitudes, intentions, and behaviors and resolving to become better.

Grace. Fully accepting and living in the reality that His grace and forgiveness is sufficient for every sin and He remembers it no more, as we have been obedient to follow His confession directives. The healing process has begun, and we can confidently move on, even though it may take time for full mending to take place.

### *Receiving a Confession:*

If you are spiritually mature possessing the highest of noble character and integrity, you may find others coming to you to release their burden and confess a sin. Here is how you should properly prepare yourself to receive that and help mend the heavy heart of another.

Preparation. You must prepare your heart and mind to possibly receive very shocking and disturbing information. You are not to judge, but to only be a conduit to God. Everything must be in the strictest of confidence.

Listen. Truly, this is your sole purpose, not to overly comment or give advice or pass judgement or question. You are to listen as a neutral observer, being attentive and with appropriate body language and facial expressions of encouraging neutrality.

Discern. Let them completely finish talking and do not interject. If they stop and pause for a few moments and are looking at you inquisitively, simply say, “Yes, continue, I’m listening” to help them feel comfortable in finishing.

Filter everything through the Cross. Always be attentive, waiting appropriately as they may need, and filter the person, their emotions, and everything you hear through Christ on the Cross.

Continual silent prayer. Inwardly, silently, and imperceptibly you are sending prayers of God’s love and forgiveness into them. Pray that they strongly feel Christ’s presence, realize what changes they may need to undertake, that they are assured of His love and forgiveness, and can begin the healing process to move on.

Pray, don’t counsel. When they are finished, pray out loud just what you have been praying silently as the Spirit prompts you. Do not condone nor condemn nor counsel. Just pray.

Announce. Be sure to announce assuredly in your prayer that God’s forgiveness is theirs, and they are cleansed of the wrongdoing and are free to turn from that event and move on.

Hands-on. Oftentimes, an appropriate light touch with the fingertips on a shoulder or the forehead can be a powerful sensation as you pray that Christ Himself is touching them now with His love and forgiveness and healing. Yes, we must always be cautious and use discernment, but this light touch is immensely powerful as you are the conduit of Christ’s presence.

## ***Guidance—Hearing the Divine Whisper***

Tune in your spiritual eyes and ears and be attentive to the Holy Spirit’s directives. It’s important for you, your family, and in corporate group matters as well.

*There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we may be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of external affairs. But deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, song and worship and a gentle receptiveness to divine breathings.*

—Thomas Kelly

*It is not enough to hold that God did great things for our fathers: not enough to pride ourselves on the inheritance of victories of faith: not enough to build the sepulchers of those who were martyred by men unwilling, in their day of trial as we may be in our own, to hear new voices of a living God. Our duty is to see whether God is with us; whether we expect great things from Him; whether we do not practically place Him far off, forgetting that, if He is, He is about us, speaking to us words that have not been heard before, guiding us to paths on which earlier generations have not been able to enter.*

—Brooke Foss Westcott

*Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice. So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 1 Kings 19:11–13 NKJV*

**Guidance.** The spiritual discipline of guidance is also both inward and corporate. We may think of it primarily as inward, but there are many times where a church or group needs direction and it becomes important for all the members to hear God's directives clearly. Furthermore, families often need guidance in major decisions such as location changes, job changes, home purchases, and other important decisions where both spouses need to hear clearly from God and be in agreement.

Guidance is all about listening and hearing clearly the directives of God and following through accordingly. The better our listening skills, the better able we will be in understanding His guidance for us. The Holy Spirit may speak to us in a myriad of ways, but most the time, His still small voice will be perceived as a leading or prompting or an opening up of the mind or an inner voice or testimony to a given course of action. Oftentimes, the information just seems to pop in out of nowhere or we have a strong sense of His affirmation toward a given choice. The more we listen and hear Him, the more accustomed to His whisper we will become. Once we believe that we have heard from the Holy Spirit, then we should seek confirmation from another person or another source where God may confirm what we believe we have internally heard.

Tomorrow we will look deeper into the aspects of divine guidance.

## ***Surely the Lord Is in This Place—Don't Miss Him***

God's Spirit is everywhere. Connect, listen, sense; learn, confirm, and follow.

*I am satisfied that when the Almighty wants me to do or not to do any particular thing, he finds a way of letting me know.*

—Abraham Lincoln

*And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light, that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way."*

—Minnie L. Haskins

*When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." Genesis 28:16 NIV*

We can fail to hear God speak if we are not attentive, and sometimes, He gets our attention through more profound actions or events in our life. It is better for us if we do not miss His presence and voice in the first place, rather than navigating through difficult and treacherous obstacles. His guidance is not insider information to guide us into blissful success and happiness, but He will guide us onto the path that is perfectly the best for us for what He wants to accomplish through us. Also, please note that hearing God does not make one spiritually superior; it just means you are an attentive listener. And, yes, you must always have discernment to know the difference between the Divine Whisper, your own natural thoughts, and the spiritual deceptions of the enemy.

Furthermore, seeking His guidance does not mean being passive and doing nothing while we wait to clearly hear. We are always to be about His business, doing everything diligently that we already know we should be doing as we wait patiently for further directives. Always continue to pray and seek guidance, while exercising good judgment, wisdom, initiatives, and making intelligent and responsible choices. His guidance is not a shortcut, and sometimes, we just have to take some risks and move forward in faith.

Once we have heard the directives of the Holy Spirit, we are expected to act appropriately and obediently. Oftentimes, however, we may want to seek confirmation of what we believe we have heard, and this may come in a myriad of ways. Frequently, it is the simple goosebumps that we get when we strongly sense the presence of the Lord or the tearful emotions which may ensue. Confirmation may come directly from others as they speak to you, or Scripture, words on a page, numbers, songs or sounds or music, sights or spiritual sensations, smells or visions, all of nature—including butterflies, birds, pets and more—dreams, material objects which just oddly seem to come from nowhere, or even direct visitations by angels themselves.

Yes, truly God can speak to you in almost any way, and if you sense something as a spiritual sensation or message, then take it as such; otherwise, take it as natural. It all depends on how you are spiritually wired, and God knows best how to communicate clearly to you—just be open and receptive. Remember, God's presence is everywhere.

## ***Celebration Is Pure Joy***

A disciplined heart and mind bring joy. Celebration begins with Him and completes within.

*Joy is the serious business of heaven.*

—C. S. Lewis

*Every happening, great and small, is a parable whereby God speaks to us, and the art of life is to get the message.*

—Malcolm Muggeridge

*Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* Nehemiah 8:10 NIV

*I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.* John 15:11 NIV

**Celebration.** The spiritual discipline of celebration is our final discipline to discuss and, like many others, is both an inward and corporate expression. Celebration is displayed as Christ's joy in the life of the believer. Joy can sometimes be elusive, but it is essential for a strong and effective Christian walk. It must be cultivated and developed throughout all our life experiences, no matter how difficult or tragic those experiences may be.

The pathway to true joy may seem odd, but our joy comes from obedience to Christ. Without obedience, joy is superficial and hollow. When obedience works itself irremovably from the fabric of our lives, that is when we will find Christ's joy within us, and our joy will be complete. The responsibility is ours. The choices in life are ours. The formula for success and joy is simple—obedience brings success with joy, and rebellion brings disaster with chaos. You must put self aside and devote your life to something greater—it's Christ's joy you want, not fleeting happiness from the world. The whole of the spiritual disciplines is to discipline your heart and mind to view life from Christ's perspective and a scriptural perspective. We must trust God, rely on God, and seek our rest in Him. Joyful celebration is a consciously chosen way of thinking and living each of our days in the light and love of Jesus Christ. Make that your choice today.

## ***The Spiritual Disciplines***

### **Worship**

*(Inward, Outward, and Corporate)*

#### *Inward Disciplines*

**Prayer**  
**Fasting**  
**Study**  
**Meditation/Reflection**  
**A Well-Ordered Heart**

#### *Outward Disciplines*

**Servanthood**  
**Submission**  
**Simplicity**  
**Secrecy**  
**Solitude**  
**Suffering**

#### *Corporate Disciplines*

**Confession**  
**Guidance**  
**Celebration**