

# SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

## I. Introduction to the Disciplines

### A) WHAT IS A “SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE”?

1. Spiritual Disciplines are not the desired end product of spiritual life – but rather they are a means to an end. They are... the intentional development of authentic Spiritual life and intimacy with God.
2. Quotes about the disciplines:
  - a. *“God has given us the Disciplines of the spiritual life as a means of receiving His grace. The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us. ... They are God’s means of grace.”*  
Foster, Celebration of Disciplines, p. 6
  - b. *“A discipline is something to which we submit in order to effect change. ... God has given us the disciplines of grace as a means to help us grow in our love for him and our neighbors.”*  
Moore, DofG, p. 15-16
  - c. *“The Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.”* Whitney, SDCL, p. 17
  - d. *“A discipline is any activity within our power that we engage in to enable us to do what we cannot do by direct effort.”* Willard, Spirit of Disciplines, p. 353
  - e. *“... spiritual growth and vitality stem from what we actually **do** with our lives, from the **habits** we form, and from the **character** that results.”* Willard, SofD, p. 20
  - f. Henri Nouwen → Saw the disciplines as a means “to create space to meet with God that you otherwise had not planned on.
  - g. M. Robert Mulholland → “Things that intrude into our lives to align us with God’s purpose.”
  - h. Douglas Rumford → “A means to develop soul memory for reflexive spiritual responsiveness.”

### B) BASIC DEFINITION OF A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE:

1. A deliberately self imposed habit that nurtures spiritual health and fosters spiritual growth leading to maturity.
2. Deliberately self imposed actions to alter existing life and thought patterns, thereby breaking the normal cycle of life and breaking the focus on the mundane to contemplate the sublime.
3. Repetitious actions driven by spiritual decisions rather than natural environmental reactions.
4. Spiritual exercises to develop “Sacred Rhythms” to engage in intentional spirituality in the pursuit of intimacy with God.

### C) BASIC CONCEPTS BEHIND SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES:

1. These are called disciplines because they are not the natural intuitive thing to do. Physical disciplines include developmental exercises within the natural order of the physical body or mental aptitudes. Spiritual disciplines are developmental exercises that open us into the spiritual realm of existence.
2. They are disciplines because I need to make a conscious choice to engage in them... they are not what I would otherwise do of my own accord.
3. There are times I don’t feel like doing what I know to be necessary for my spiritual health. Disciplines provide methodology and structure and order to carry me through the times I would otherwise ignore my spiritual health.

# SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

## D) CAUTIONS!

1. Spiritual disciplines are not the same as spiritual maturity. Though they are intended to enable and foster spiritual growth, actual spiritual maturity is in the purview of the Spirit.
2. Spiritual disciplines are not unlike any other methodology in that they seek to engender a more disciplined approach to God. There is a danger that these methodologies though helpful in fostering growth may become a trap to a more legalistic methodology approach to spirituality. The proper focus of the disciplines is to know God at a deeper and more dependent relational level... seeking His will and purpose and growing in maturity and confidence in hearing and obeying Him.
  - a. We engage in the disciplines because we love God and want to press into Him and know Him better.
  - b. Engaging in the disciplines essentially places us on the spiritual highway where we can be more easily picked up by the Spirit... but it is not our effort that earns us the right of access, but rather God's grace that bestows it and draws us in.
3. Spiritual disciplines focus on the relational and qualitative aspects of knowing God, not the intellectual and quantitative aspects. It is more of an "Emotional Quotient" rather than merely an "Intellectual Quotient." [EQ vs. IQ]
4. By nature, the results of the disciplines may be seen and perhaps measured, but the disciplines themselves will resist quantitative analysis. This is always the nature of EQ components.
5. Spiritual disciplines are not a guaranty for spiritual growth; rather they open the opportunity for growth by creating space for God to allow something good to happen.

## II. Identifying the Disciplines

Different Christian disciples, Mystics, and discipline practitioners through the ages have identified different orders and descriptions of the spiritual disciplines. These are less about one being right and another wrong, and more about different or more useful ways to relate to or convey these ideals to others.

1. Richard Foster: [authenticdiscipleship.org preference though we added contemplation & giving]

### Inward Disciplines:

Prayer  
Fasting  
Study  
Meditation & Contemplation

### Outward Disciplines:

Simplicity  
Solitude  
Submission  
Service  
Giving

### Corporate Disciplines:

Confession  
Worship  
Guidance  
Celebration

2. Terry Moore:

Discipline of the Word of God  
Discipline of Prayer  
Discipline of Public Worship  
Discipline of Observing the Lord's Day

Discipline of Giving  
Discipline of Fasting  
Discipline of Solitude  
Discipline of Silence before the Lord

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

### 3. Donald Whitney:

#### “A” list:

Bible Intake  
Prayer  
Worship  
Evangelism  
Service  
Stewardship  
Fasting  
Silence/Solitude  
Journaling  
Learning

#### “B” list:

Confession  
Accountability  
Simplicity  
Submission  
Spiritual Direction  
Celebration  
Affirmation  
Sacrifice  
“watching”

### 4. Dallas Willard:

#### Disciplines of Abstinence:

Solitude  
Silence  
Fasting  
Frugality  
Chastity  
Secrecy  
Sacrifice

#### Disciplines of Engagement:

Study  
Worship  
Celebration  
Service  
Prayer  
Fellowship  
Confession  
Submission

## **III. The Role of the Disciplines in Spiritual Life**

### 1. DEVELOPING & DEEPENING RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- a. Relational intimacy is reinforced when we engage in the disciplines.
- b. It is a myth to believe that relational intimacy develops by happenstance, or occurs under neglect.
- c. We need to be deliberate and intentional about desiring God – to know Him and love Him is the heart of discipleship.
- d. It really comes down to understanding what the call to salvation and discipleship is all about:
  - i. If it is merely to avoid hell and its discomforts, we have too small a view.
  - ii. If knowing the “TRUTH” doesn’t cause you to love God something is wrong. Satan and the demons know the truth and hate God.
  - iii. To know, love, and serve are the heart of what Scripture teaches about God.
  - iv. Discipleship is all about having Jesus’ mind, heart, and mission formed within individual disciples who then purposefully identify and align themselves with our Lord’s purpose.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

### 2. ATTAINING & MAINTAINING SPIRITUAL HEALTH

- a. Developing physical health requires the disciplines of a healthy diet and exercise program, including adequate rest and relaxation, supplements, etc.
- b. Developing mental health requires the disciplines of study & learning, as well as emotional & physical health practices.
- c. Developing spiritual health requires appropriate disciplines intentionally pursued.
- d. Spiritual disciplines are a necessary practice to foster spiritual health and awareness of God.

### 3. NURTURING & CULTIVATING SPIRITUAL MATURITY

- a. Is accomplished by deliberately moving from where you are naturally, to where God would have you be. It is moving from the natural into the supernatural.
- b. It involves discovering and submitting your will to God's, and to enlisting in His Kingdom purposes as a living sacrifice. It is deliberate movement toward God's goals for me and humanity.
- c. Spiritual disciplines are what keep us upon the pathway of our spiritual journey with God.
- d. The goal of discipleship is not to become a better person, or even a good person; the goal is forming the nature of Messiah within and deliberately and lovingly serving God.
- e. All believers are called to this end – it is not just for pastors or missionaries. All believers are called to become mature disciples advancing God's agenda.

### 4. THE PRACTICE OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- a. Routine and specific activities are required to develop the habit of spiritual practice. They are best developed and nurtured under the guidance and encouragement of a trained spiritual guide – such as a 'Spiritual Coach' or 'Spiritual Director', and better still in a 'Discipleship Group' or 'Covenant Community'.
- b. These practices bring benefit to believers of all levels of maturity, but there are practical safeguards that should be understood and agreed upon prior to agreeing to a guided relationship. These safeguards include but are not necessarily limited to the following:
  - i. A more formal agreement preferably in writing as to how the relations will develop and what the goals and objectives of the training cycle are.
  - ii. A more formal understanding of the theology and qualifications of the spiritual guide. Just because something is 'spiritual' doesn't mean it is good, healthy, or honoring Jesus.
  - iii. Spiritual life begins and ends with the Alpha and Omega of the Bible... the Messiah Jesus... our savior and Lord, and under the guidance of the Spirit.
- c. As we engage in the practices we learn to hear God and follow His voice – it is the New Testament equivalent to Moses and the Hebrews following the column of fire and cloud in their wilderness journey... done intentionally and obediently.
- d. It requires our setting necessary and appropriate priorities.
- e. There is a purposeful nature to the practices – we perform them because we seek greater intimacy with God and to be more like Jesus who demonstrated the practices in His walk... teaching His disciples to do likewise.
- f. Disciples seek to become like their Master... it is the Biblical mandate taught in Scripture [Mat 10:25]. As disciples the choice we make of who we desire to become like speaks to our faith and our priorities.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- i. If we desire to become like Jesus – we will do the things He did... including practicing the spiritual disciplines.
- ii. If we desire to be like the worldly leaders who seek fame, fortune, and material benefits – we are ignoring the call to become like Jesus.
- iii. There is no reason we cannot have both if it is God’s will – but seeking first the Kingdom of God and becoming like Jesus is the necessary priority [Mat 6:25-34].

**IV The Practice of Inward Disciplines:** these include disciplines where our spiritual self-awareness marks our journey toward Christlikeness throughout our life time – we are aware that we are becoming more like our Lord, which drives us further up and further in... to God.

Richard Foster observes: “Meditation introduces us to the inner life, fasting is an accompanying means, study transforms our minds, but it is the Discipline of Prayer that brings us into the deepest and highest work of the Spirit.” He continues with: “With the decline of the inward reality of the Christian faith, a tendency developed to increase all that’s left – the outward form. And whenever there is a form devoid of spiritual power, law will take over because law always carries with it a sense of security and manipulative power.” Christianity is a profoundly Spiritual and mystical faith – it is Spiritual because the Spirit permeates and indwells every aspect; it is mystical because there are so many things we understand only in part like looking into a darkened mirror [1 Cor 13:12]. Our attempts to make it more concrete and less Spiritual or mystical are foolish, and usually lead to legalistic methodologies that miss the Heart of God.

### 1. **PRAYER**

#### a. The need for prayer:

- i. *“THE NEWS ABOUT HIM WAS SPREADING AND LARGE CROWDS WERE GATHERING TO HEAR HIM AND TO BE HEALED OF THEIR SICKNESSES. BUT JESUS HIMSELF WOULD OFTEN SLIP AWAY TO THE DESERTED PLACES AND PRAY.”* LK. 5:15-16
- ii. *“DEVOTE YOURSELVES TO PRAYER”* COL. 4:2
- iii. *“... WE WILL DEVOTE OURSELVES TO PRAYER AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.”* ACTS 6:4
- iv. Prayer changes me inwardly, making me an instrument of God’s grace.
- v. “Prayer is to faith what research is to science.” – PT Forsythe.
- vi. “To pray is to change. Prayer is the central avenue that God uses to transform us.... In prayer we learn to think God’s thoughts after Him: to desire the things He desires, to love the things He loves, to do the things He wills.” Richard Foster – Celebration of Disciplines.

#### b. How would you define prayer as a spiritual discipline?

- i. It is God’s chosen method of access into His presence, where we encounter Him relationally and are comforted, directed, and strengthened.
- ii. It is hanging with God where my nature catches glimpses of eternity and is caught up in Heavenly mindedness.
- iii. It is the means in which we catch up with God and what He is doing in our life, in our community, and in our world. It is where we catch a glimpse of God’s bigger picture and learn to lovingly submit to our role in His plan.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- iv. It is a means of getting me past myself [my limited comprehension and understanding] and deeper into God [the well-spring of life, truth and ultimate meaning].
- v. It involves both meditation and contemplation through reflection on Scripture and on God Himself.
- vi. Prayer is God's ordained means of relational contact whereby I am purposefully transformed to become more like Jesus, more aware of my status as a child of God, and more useful for God's purposes.
- c. Why would you incorporate prayer as a discipline into your life?
  - i. Jesus instructed us that we should pray, and Scripture teaches that we should pray without ceasing.
  - ii. It is a strategic and intentional priority to relate with God... otherwise prayer will become minimal and marginalized.
  - iii. It is God's ordained and initiated method to sync up our fallen nature... getting past our spiritual poverty in our physical state into the riches of the spiritual state.
  - iv. It is the means by which I am comforted, encouraged, and conformed to the likeness of Jesus.
- d. How might you incorporate prayer as a discipline into your life?
  - i. To be a discipline, it needs to be intentional and strategic. It needs to be done regularly and often.
  - ii. It needs to be regular and consistent to develop into a means to encounter God, to hear from Him and be realigned by Him.
  - iii. It may necessitate regular times of daily involvement or times during the week end... as when I commute to work, or contemplate throughout the day.
  - iv. There are different modes or forms of prayer that have been described through the ages, both personal and corporate. These include:
    - 1. Discursive Prayer which is an ongoing spoken conversation that occurs while I'm doing life.
    - 2. Mental Prayer that is done quietly in my mind whenever God prompts me to seek Him or His guidance.
    - 3. Centering Prayer which is a means of stilling the mind so I may focus more closely on God and move into the spirit realm – this has been practiced by the Christian mystics through the ages.
    - 4. Prayers may include complaint, praise, worship, submission, relinquishment, guidance, and intercession, etc.
  - v. It may also involve times of retreat for specific equipping or refreshing.

### 2. Fasting

- a. The need for fasting:
  - i. *“When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting.*
  - ii. *But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men 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.”* Matt. 6:16-18

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- iii. Fasting and wilderness experiences played a crucial role in each of the great leaders of the Bible – it is not coincidental. Fasting is a method to get us out of our comfort zone where He can sync up our spiritual perceptions with God.
- b. How would you define fasting as a spiritual discipline?
  - i. It is a discipline that by intentionally denying and controlling my physical desires and sensitivity, increases my spiritual strength and sensitivity.
  - ii. By breaking the hold something may have on my physical nature, it sharpens my perception of the spiritual life around me.
  - iii. Fasting is the strategic refusal or ritual rejection of something I need or want to encourage spiritual discipline and strength.
  - iv. Biblical fasting is always done for spiritual purposes, and involves the abstinence of something valuable to take hold of something of far greater value.
- c. Why would you incorporate fasting as a discipline into your life?
  - i. As regular preparation to break the pattern of conformance to this world's order... in preparation for engaging our world that encourages physical pleasures and worldly emphasis. Fasting is a means to counter the worldly norm.
  - ii. To break a pattern of behavior or overcome a spiritual barrier that is preventing me from doing what I know God wants me to do.
  - iii. As preparation for a major decision or embarking on a new venture or to strengthen my spirit for a new ordeal.
  - iv. It is a means of denying certain pleasures you enjoy in preference to focus on God's priority.
  - v. Fasting has particular value in strengthening spiritual sensitivity and preparation for spiritual warfare.
- d. How might you incorporate fasting as a discipline into your life?
  - i. It may be done as a regular weekly event, or periodically on an as needed basis.
  - ii. It may be a partial fast of skipping a meal, or abstaining from certain types of food or drink, or a more complete fast.
  - iii. All fasts should include plenty of water, juice, and electrolyte supplements – there are physical requirements that need to be met throughout any duration of fasting.
  - iv. In all cases it should be for short periods of time and should be supervised until you gain proficiency with fasting to avoid adverse health impacts.
  - v. It may be refraining from food, TV, alcohol, dessert, or anything that God puts on my heart for the purpose of deliberately focusing on Him.
  - vi. It may be linked with one or more of the disciplines like prayer or solitude.
  - vii. It is almost always used as a strategic element of spiritual focus for short periods of time.

### 3. **Study**

- a. The need for study:
  - i. *“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth”* II Tim. 2:15

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- ii. *“Do not conform any longer 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
- iii. Ecstatic experiences though delightful will not free our hearts nor strengthen our minds. Jesus taught that the truth is what opens the door to freedom. Study empowers the disciplining and steadying of the mind through developing knowledge and wisdom.
- iv. Knowing the truth is foundational for the disciple and sets you on the path for freedom.
- b. How would you define study as a spiritual discipline?
  - i. It is a means of knowing God and learning His truths and priorities through the study of Scripture.
  - ii. When you love someone, you want to know all you can about them... it is a means of becoming closer to them. Knowing about God is a way of falling more deeply in love with Him.
  - iii. Contemplation is devotional, meditation is developmental, but study is analytical.
  - iv. It may be a combination of things from regular reading of Scripture to learn the shape of redemptive history, to book studies to see how a particular book falls into the plan of redemption, it could be a topical study to answer burning questions in your mind or heart, or it could be a verse study to focus on a particular aspect of God’s truth that caught your attention.
- c. Why would you incorporate study as a discipline into your life?
  - i. All the disciplines are a means for the Spirit to transform us – “be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” It is a way of encouraging the transformation God has started within.
  - ii. It is not enough just to believe the truth someone has told me. For me it necessitates my exploration to learn and see the truth for myself.
  - iii. In making the truth my own not only am I transformed by it but I am also better prepared to give an account of my faith to others.
- d. How might you incorporate study as a discipline into your life?
  - i. The study of Scripture is a fundamental aspect of discipleship – and discipleship is best accomplished when in community. Regular study of the Scriptures with others is a great way to accomplish this discipline.
  - ii. Individual study is another approach – whether it is part of a daily devotional approach or a more rigorous approach to study in seminary or online discipleship programs.
  - iii. It is of critical importance that study not become an end in itself... all too many people who embark on more rigorous study fall into pride and arrogance about their Scriptural knowledge.
    1. When properly applied, study should break your heart as you observe God’s great love for humanity and His selfless sacrifices to promote and encourage relational intimacy with humanity.
    2. When properly applied it leads you to become more like Jesus.
    3. When improperly applied it leads you to become more like the Pharisees falling into legalism and self promotion with a semblance of religious spirituality.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- iv. Study involves the aspects of:
  - 1. Repetition or repeated input of texts, thoughts and ideas.
  - 2. Concentration or focused thought.
  - 3. Comprehension or enlightened understanding.
  - 4. Reflection which is the contemplative process of seeing things from different perspectives and different lights.
- e. What IS Scripture to you?
  - i. The Word of God – the Logos.
  - ii. It is the food of discipleship – necessary for equipping the people of God to know Him and do His ministry.
    - 1. It is the proper source for personal and group study.
    - 2. It is the authoritative revelation of God to humanity.
    - 3. How you ‘see Scripture’ determines how you approach it... whether it is a ‘how to book, or a ‘historical book’, or a ‘rule book’ – all have subsequent responses, but if that is all you see then that is likely all you’ll find.
    - 4. I see Scripture as God’s Personal self disclosure to humanity, and the revelation of His redemptive work through history to restore humanity to relational intimacy with Him. As such, the Bible is amazing and refreshing and constantly surprising as God continues to disclose Himself and work through it.
    - 5. Jesus accused the Pharisees that they searched the Scriptures because that was where they expected to find truth and life... but the Scripture points to Jesus as the source of truth and life [John 5:39].
- f. How would you go about developing the proper means to study?
  - i. Biblical literacy is built upon the practice of Hermeneutics – which is the art of studying the written Word to understand what the author intended to say to the people the text was originally addressed to.
  - ii. Almost all Scripture is “occasional” – meaning it was written to speak into something God’s people needed to hear at a crucial time. The Hermeneutical art of interpretation seeks to identify all relevant information related to the original occurrence, and then prayerfully applying these truths to our current situations.
  - iii. Hermeneutics is a valuable means that all authentic disciples should undertake.
  - iv. The detailed notes about hermeneutics are available under the Biblical Literacy tab on the [authenticdiscipleship.org](http://authenticdiscipleship.org) website.

#### 4. **Meditation & Contemplation**

- a. The need for meditation & contemplation:
  - i. *“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.”* Joshua 1:8
  - ii. Meditation on Scripture is how to get the Logos infused in your consciousness.
  - iii. Where meditation prayerfully ponders the Word of God with the aid of the Spirit, contemplation prayerfully ponders God with the aid of the Spirit. Meditation focuses on the Word, while contemplation focuses on the Person of God.
  - iv. It is not enough to know about God, the goal is to know Him personally and intimately.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- b. How would you define meditation & contemplation as a spiritual discipline?
  - i. Meditation and contemplation are where we create the emotional and spiritual space where God engages us through our imagination.
  - ii. It is both contemplative and reflective prayer where our mind and heart are filled with God.
  - iii. It is normal that we dwell upon the things that are most important to us...
    - 1. Meditation is the act of dwelling upon God's word expecting the Spirit to provide fresh insight and illumination of His truth and fresh applications for our life and our world.
    - 2. Contemplation is the act of dwelling upon God Himself for the purpose of knowing Him more fully and relating to Him more intimately.
- c. Why would you incorporate meditation & contemplation as a discipline into your life?
  - i. If God is real to you and you want to know Him more and have Him become more real, you would necessarily engage in all the disciplines... especially meditation, contemplation and prayer.
  - ii. Meditation is a means of getting God's Word to settle into and be digested by you... it is getting Scripture into the reality of your life.
  - iii. Contemplation is the means of being more captivated with the wonder and beauty of God... where He becomes more real and more compelling to me.
  - iv. The point of meditation is not to become a spiritual master or even to master Scripture; the point of meditation is to be mastered by God and His Word.
  - v. The point of contemplation is not to brag about the things God has revealed to us about Himself; the point of contemplation is to fall more deeply in love with God and to be transformed by the reality of how great His love for me is.
- d. How would you incorporate meditation & contemplation as a discipline into your life?
  - i. My approach to meditation:
    - 1. Is to read and then to ponder it... and allow my mind and heart to search the text. Like all digestive practices, it takes time.
    - 2. When something catches my attention or causes me a problem, I ask God to reveal the truth to me. It often involves aspects of study, certainly prayerful reflection, and then time as God works it out within me.
    - 3. I intentionally allow God to use my imagination to shape my thinking of His word.
    - 4. Wisdom and theology don't occur solely from reading other people's understanding of truth, but it takes root in our life when we see things that don't make sense to us and we call out to God to help me make sense of this.
  - ii. My approach to contemplation:
    - 1. Builds upon my knowledge and understanding of God through His self revelation in Scripture, and the experience of the indwelling Spirit within drawing me to God "like a moth to the light."
    - 2. I look for passages and teachings where God's character is demonstrated and ponder that.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

3. I look for passages where men encounter God and ponder their response to Him, and what God revealed to them.
- iii. In both meditation and contemplation the Word forms the basis of my thinking and I ask the Spirit to use my imagination to help fill in the empty spaces.
- iv. Meditation is more rational and an exercise more of the mind, while contemplation is more relational and an exercise more of the heart. The two combined provide a more stereographic view of God.

### **V. The Practice of Outward Disciplines:**

#### **1. Simplicity:**

- a. The need for simplicity:
  - i. *“I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.”* Phil. 4:11
  - ii. *“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business”*  
I Thess. 4:11
  - iii. *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.* Mat 6:33
- b. How would you define simplicity as a spiritual discipline? Why would you incorporate simplicity as a discipline into your life?
  - i. Simplicity is freedom from the worldly values that brings true joy and balance. Hoarding is bondage to the worldly values that brings fear of loss, and anxiety that I don’t have enough.
  - ii. The discipline requires us to differentiate between what are our ‘needs’ and ‘wants’ – God expects that my needs ought to be met and that if I have enough to help meet the needs of others. Too often however, I focus on what I want until it becomes a need and a snare to me. Simplicity keeps me away from the lusts of the eyes, heart, & mouth.
  - iii. Simplicity is an ongoing exercise of the mind and heart that prevents me from getting caught up in the things of the world. It is an inward reality that presents itself in an outward life style.
  - iv. Richard Foster observes, “the lust for affluence in contemporary society is psychotic. It is psychotic because it has completely lost touch with reality. We crave things we neither need nor enjoy. We buy things we do not want to impress people we do not like. Conformity to a sick society is to be sick.”
  - v. The spiritual discipline of simplicity provides perspective on life and sets us free to see and receive the provision of God as a gift and not as a right. It sets us free to share with others in an outward social fashion that blesses both the giver and the receiver.
  - vi. The LOVE of money [excess] is the root of evil... and invites idolatry.
- c. How might you incorporate simplicity as a discipline into your life?
  - i. To deliberately be satisfied with less and give away what I don’t really need.
  - ii. To periodically reevaluate my life to ascertain what I really need, and relegate my wants to a strategic second tier that I visit occasionally.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- iii. Food and wine are good... but do I need to spend hundreds of dollars on a meal? Or would a modest meal be better and then give the surplus away.
- iv. Simplicity doesn't involve over indulgence... and it roots out the human tendency toward greed and avarice.
- v. Simplicity doesn't necessarily mean we live in want... it means we learn to be satisfied and fulfilled by a simpler life.
- vi. Of all the things in our world today, simplicity probably stands out as one of the greatest differences between authentic disciples of Jesus and those who follow the world order. With simplicity we demonstrate that we do not follow the world order, and truly stand out as a counter-culture influence.
- vii. I could limit my discretionary spending, and reconsider the ways I spend my money and my time. It is ok to enjoy things God has provided and enabled us to acquire... but desire and excess are all too strong a seduction for me.
- viii. I could drive a Honda when I could afford a Porsche. Simplicity puts me more in touch with others... especially the moderate, disenfranchised and disadvantaged.
- ix. I could periodically review my life in light of my values and choose simplicity for love's sake.

### 2. **Solitude**

#### a. The need for solitude:

- i. *"Come away by yourselves to a lonely place & rest a while"* Mk. 6:31
- ii. *"Settle yourself in solitude and you will come upon Him in yourself."* Teresa of Avila
- iii. *"One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings, and one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair."* Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- iv. *"The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"* 1 Kings 19:11-13
- i. The soul needs time to breathe... to exhale. Solitude is where we can make time with God to rethink life. This can't be done in public as there are too many distractions. Getting away allows me to re-sort how life works... what my priorities are and how to restructure my life accordingly.
- ii. Getting alone with God makes quiet space where the noise, clutter and deceit of the world can be deliberately set aside while we contemplate God and His word.  
[Mat 13:22]
- iii. It is getting out of our comfort zone to hear and see what is real.

#### b. How would you define solitude as a spiritual discipline?

- i. Solitude and its attending silence is an act of expectant & positive listening.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- ii. Through the stilling of the mind and the intentional separation from external and internal noise, I am more able to hear God’s voice and discern the nudging of the Spirit.
- iii. God is always speaking through the Spirit – holding creation together and aligning His followers with His heart and mind – it is in solitude that I make it my priority to listen to Him, to attend to Him, and to align myself with Him.
- iv. God does not shout at us, instead He whispers. If we do not make time for silence, we can miss His speaking to us altogether. [1 Kings 19:11-13]
- c. Why would you incorporate solitude as a discipline into your life?
  - i. There is too much noise and distraction in the world that produces spiritual deafness. We need the ability to hear that we may more adequately follow. “My sheep hear my voice...” [John 10:27].
  - ii. Jesus [as well as King David, Elijah & Moses] demonstrated emersion in solitude as a means of soul care where they both sought and heard God.
- d. How would you incorporate solitude as a discipline into your life?
  - i. Inner silence and inner solitude are inseparable... without silence there is no solitude. Though silence involves the absence of speech, it always involves the act of attentive listening... of perceptual focus.
  - ii. It is getting alone with God... it can be in my car, or in my family room chair, or on a walk in nature, or sitting in a chapel, or during moments of wakefulness at night... when I become aware and focus my attention of heart and mind on God.
  - iii. It is a necessary part of my times of contemplation and reflection.
  - iv. I often dialogue with God throughout my day, and solitude is where I go to listen and question and sometimes complain.
- e. Requirements for solitude:
  - i. A quiet and safe place out of the busy stream of life.
  - ii. Getting away into nature is one of my favorite places to go, but driving alone in my car works well too.
  - iii. Create space for quiet contemplation and reflection... where you can intentionally process before God.
- f. Make it happen!
  - i. It is useful to set specific times and places to get away.
  - ii. Sometime each day you should have some time for quiet processing... even if it is only in the bathroom! You should also have more prolonged times of getting away like on a weekend or after work, etc. It is a joy to take a solitude journey with a loved one of like mindedness... where you make time to be alone and to process together.
  - iii. Try different places to get away... discover places that have an atmosphere conducive to you for solitude with God.
  - iv. Don’t bring distractions into these experiences... deliberately turn your phone to mute, and leave your iPod off. Noise and business kill spiritual life.

### 3. **Submission:**

- a. The need for submission:

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- i. *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.”* Mark 8:34-35
  - ii. *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”* Eph. 5:21
  - iii. *“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
- b. How would you define submission as a spiritual discipline?
- i. Submission is the deliberate act of placing myself under the authority of another as an act of obedience and worship.
  - ii. Authority and submission are a spiritual dance performed in the Spirit where mutual trust and safety are assured, and where leadership is demonstrated in submissive humility rather than the exercise of authority. A person is not a leader because they wield authority, and a follower has responsibility for the choices they make as to who they follow.
  - iii. Submission is placing another’s needs or well being above my own.
  - iv. Submission is a discipline because it is something that runs counter to normal human tendencies.
  - v. With all disciplines it is subject to checks and balances that guard both leader and follower... the submittee and the submitter. Spiritual abuse is one of the most egregious sins within the church, and while God holds both leader and follower accountable for their decisions and actions, leaders are far more accountable for their actions for they are expected to know better – *But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin [stumble], it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.* Mat 18:6.
- c. Why would you incorporate submission as a discipline into your life?
- i. Submission is not an act of weakness or impotency; rather it is an act of trust and obedience. Submission is an inherent act within all relationships where we submit to one another in love and trust for mutual benefit.
  - ii. We submit to Christ because He submitted to the Father, we submit to others because God has placed them in a position of authority, care, or influence over me.
  - iii. Richard Foster rightly observes, “Nothing can put people into bondage like religion, and nothing in religion has done more to manipulate and destroy people than a deficient teaching on submission.”
  - iv. Christian submission is the willful placing of the interests and well-being of another – especially one under my care – over the interests and well-being of myself. Christian submission is mutual and interdependent – it is following the loving and selfless example of our Lord.
- d. How would you incorporate submission as a discipline into your life?
- i. It would entail regular meetings with the person God has placed over me for the purpose of my care and growth... honoring their influence in my life.
  - ii. It would involve selecting mature and wise people to act as a discipler, a coach, or a mentor for me – and meeting regularly with me to foster my growth and maturity.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- iii. It would involve identifying someone who I respect as a leader and whose maturity is an example I want to emulate – then deliberately placing myself in a position allowing them to influence my life.
- iv. It involves the deliberate pouring out myself as a living sacrifice for the cultivating and nurturing of those God has placed within the field of my care.
- e. Important safeguards on relational submission:
  - i. Submission can be a great blessing but it is also subject to abuse as many leaders fail the test of leading as Christ led – dependent upon the Father, with a clear calling and mission, with actions consistent with their mission, with a focus on eternity and a Godly hand in the present, maintaining a self-less servant approach.
  - ii. Submission must first be to God, and with Spirit breathed spiritual discernment we learn who we may trust in submission in our walk with God. Those we follow must demonstrate Christ-like character and care for those they lead. Followers are responsible to observe and evaluate their leaders and hold them accountable when they fail the example of pouring themselves out as a living sacrifice to God.
  - iii. The goal of discipleship is not merely spiritual growth, but spiritual transformation where the mind, heart and mission of Christ are formed in the disciple. Spiritual growth is developmental over time and pastoral, teacher, mentor, counselor, and coaching relationships all play a part in advancing growth... but transformation is solely the work of the Spirit. *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* Phil 1:6.

### 4. Service:

- a. The need for service:
  - i. *“As each has received a gift, employ it in serving one another.”* 1 Pet. 4:10
  - ii. *“Learn the lesson that if you are to do the work of a prophet, what you need is not a scepter but a hoe.”* Bernard of Clairvaux
  - iii. *“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. I tell you the truth, 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 13:13-17
- b. How would you define service as a spiritual discipline?
  - i. This involves doing things I would not normally do in the service of others rather than serving myself.
  - ii. There is the spiritual gift of helps where people are prepared to help others as a means of ministry calling... this often involves social justice matters of meeting needs of others in the name of Jesus. All of us have some level of each spiritual gift, and we can find an appropriate means of exercising that gift to be a blessing to others.
  - iii. It is doing for others what they cannot do for themselves as an act of obedience and worship in advancing God’s Kingdom on earth.
- c. Why would you incorporate service as a discipline into your life?

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- i. We do these things because it is important to God in the OT and to Jesus in the NT who championed the rights and the needs of the weak and disenfranchised.
- ii. It is a way to get past our normal selfish nature and identify with Jesus – being Jesus’ hands and feet in the world today.
- iii. It prepares us for reigning with Jesus.
- iv. Serving in obedience and love builds humility and breaks the hold of self-righteousness.
- d. How might you incorporate service as a discipline into your life?
  - i. As Christians we should always be kind, merciful, courteous, etc., and we can do so as a deliberate act of service to those around us – where ever we are and whatever we do.
  - ii. Acts of kindness is certainly one way to demonstrate this gift.
  - iii. Another way would be to help those who can’t help themselves – giving money, time, and talent to make another’s life more meaningful.
  - iv. Meeting needs in another who has no means to return the favor.
  - v. This may sometime mean choosing to perform an act that by its nature is humbling... something that will help shape my character.
  - vi. Visitation of the ill or infirm, calling on retirement homes, serving on missions teams to clean homes or even build homes.
  - vii. Richard Foster lists some acts of service as:
    - 1. Guarding the reputation of others by refuting slanderous talk.
    - 2. Extending common courtesy and kindness.
    - 3. Extending hospitality.
    - 4. The gift of listening and bearing burdens.
    - 5. Speaking truth in love.
    - 6. Sharing the Gospel.

### 5. **Giving:**

- a. The need for giving:
  - i. *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, ... but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven ... for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*  
Matt. 6:19-21
  - ii. *Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.* Mat 5:42
  - iii. *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.* Mat 23:23
  - iv. *Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’*  
Mat 25:34-36
- b. How would you define giving as a spiritual discipline?

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- i. It is the intentional act of obedience that profanes the treasures of this world.
- ii. To demonstrate to the world through regular giving of time, service, money, etc. that my priorities are focused on God and His Kingdom.
- iii. It is investing in eternity as an act of worship to God.
- c. Why would you incorporate giving as a discipline into your life?
  - i. To break the hold of greed on my heart... our culture so values hoarding and getting stuff, and giving freely breaks this hold on me.
  - ii. Out of obedience... God asks us to be cheerful givers and to meet the needs of others in Jesus name.
- d. How might you incorporate giving as a discipline into your life?
  - i. As a discipline it needs to be intentional and strategic – I should have specific ideals in mind to focus giving... like having a specific impact on people.
  - ii. Strategic giving should be evaluated regularly to make sure it is having the desired impact, and then adjusted accordingly in a loving and thoughtful manner.
  - iii. Giving out of guilt or impulse is not what I would consider to be disciplined giving.
  - iv. Much of the giving we do is not strategic – such as giving money to a homeless person... it makes me feel better about myself but their needs would be better served through support of a homeless service organization.
  - v. Give to support the values God has developed in your heart... what efforts catch your passion and interest? Give to those first.
  - vi. We only have a certain amount of things we can do to meet the perceived needs around us – invest wisely. And get involved – throwing money at a problem is easier than rolling up your shirt sleeves and getting your hands dirty in the life of others.
  - vii. Tithing is an old covenant discipline based on paying tribute to the Suzerain [overlord] king. Love offerings are the new covenant norm – we give out of love not out of compulsion.
  - viii. 10% of your income is a reasonable giving goal – pray about it... what does God ask of you? Some may struggle to give 10% because they don't have the income... others can and should give significantly more because of their excess earnings [Luke 21:1-4]. Some people who are wealthy have decided to live on 10% and give the 90% balance away.

### **VI. The Practice of Corporate Disciplines:**

#### **1. Confession:**

- a. The need for confession:
  - i. *“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed”*  
James 5:16
  - ii. Like Marley's ghost in the Dickens classic Scrooge, we all carry the baggage of wrongs committed and wrongs suffered, and they drag down the heart and the mind and the body. There are no tools more readily assessable to the enemy than the guilt I bear. Wounds partially healed are easily reopened by an opportune knife thrust by the enemy, and I relive in horrid fascination the things I long to forget. Jesus died to cleanse

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

me of guilt in wrongdoing and wrong being, and confession serves to cleanse my memory.

- iii. Confession necessitates the realization of the wrong committed and genuine repentance of the offense, along with the desire and hope to turn away from the offending practice. Restitution is another necessary element when appropriate. Merely being sorry for having been caught is not repentance.
  - iv. Confession puts an end to our moral or ethical pretense – where honesty leads to conviction, conviction leads to confession, confession leads to sorrow and repentance, and repentance leads to change.
- b. How would you define confession as a spiritual discipline?
- i. The ritual practice of leaving your burdens at the foot of the cross – knowing that love rather than anger brought Jesus to the cross and held Him there. Confession gives justification to Jesus’ selfless act and provides solace and comfort while we await His return.
  - ii. It is deliberately telling a trusted friend or advisor your deepest fears or greatest failures... in confidence knowing you will not be judged or condemned; that you are already forgiven.
- c. Why would you incorporate confession as a discipline into your life?
- i. To remove the illusion that I am in control of my life and don’t need the help or approval of another.
  - ii. To have another hear your confession without condemnation or rebuke is wonderful! Like taking a bath that washes the filth of life from our mind, heart and body.
  - iii. To remove the burden that my failures remind me that I carry... and the accuser reminds me that I’m not worthy.
  - iv. Scripture views salvation and sanctification as an event triggered by faith accepting God’s offer of grace, and continuing as a process throughout my life. The discipline of confession allows me to travel without the unnecessary burdens we collect along the way.
  - v. We take our offenses against God far too lightly... they are serious matters and require serious action – confession is such a remedy.
- d. How would you incorporate confession as a discipline into your life?
- i. Some liturgical churches have an open practice that I can benefit from as a member of the community. 1 Pet 2:9 reveals that Christians are a holy priesthood – we have the right to hear and forgive sin as ambassadors for Jesus. We don’t have the right to absolve sin... only God has that right. We don’t have the right to expunge the legal ramifications of sin... only the courts of law can do that. But we do have the right to pronounce a penitent believer spiritually clean before God.
  - ii. I can meet with a close friend or confidant and relieve myself of the burden there, and in turn hear their sin and accept their guilt burden. Then in prayer we can both take the matter to God and ask His cleansing and intervention.
  - iii. Same-sex accountability groups are a wonderful way to experience this grace.
  - iv. Seeking forgiveness in love from others can restore relational strength and intimacy.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

### 2. Worship

- a. The need to worship:
  - i. *“Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.”* Matt. 4:10
  - ii. *“Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.”* John 4:23-24
- b. How would you define worship as a spiritual discipline?
  - i. It begins with a proper knowledge of God and a dependent relational experience with Him. It is impossible to have such a knowledge and experience and NOT worship God.
  - ii. Worship is not merely signing songs and enjoying ecstatic emotional feelings; it is proclaiming in our spirit in agreement with the Spirit the loving greatness of God and holding Him in awe and wonder.
  - iii. The essence of idolatry is holding thoughts about God that are unworthy of His Greatness. Awe and wonder expressed in worship is an appropriate deterrent against holding unworthy thoughts about God for they demonstrate an exalted view of God.
- c. Why would you incorporate worship as a discipline into your life?
  - i. We need a clear view of the *object* of our worship for the *reason* for worship to make sense. The better question might be “how can you not worship God?” Every person Scripture describes that saw God was fundamentally changed by the experience. Moses face ‘glowed’ it radiated the light and life of God. Isaiah proclaimed in self judgment ‘woe is me.’ Ezekiel and the Apostle John fell down as though dead. This is not mere hyperbole... something real happened to them and their response took them outside the realm of the normal into the supernatural. Such are all encounters with God. And our response is awe and wonder, which leads us to worship and praise.
  - ii. I would hazard a guess that if we were not moved to worship and praise, that something was fundamentally wrong with us. When we really encounter God for who He is, it unhinges what we are... and that is actually a good thing. We are after all, created beings and God is our Creator.
  - iii. Worship is the proper response of the created to their Creator.
  - iv. Luke 19:36-40 reads - *As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”* Such is our need to worship.
- d. How would you incorporate worship as a discipline into your life?
  - i. The discipline of worship begins with prayer and contemplation, but encompasses all of the disciplines – inward, outward and corporate. All are involved in worship.
  - ii. The 1<sup>st</sup> half of the Great Commandment [Shema] forms the basis of worship Mk 12:30: *The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’* True love is always

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

demonstrated in tangible ways. Every time I pause during my day to ponder God I demonstrate a heart that loves Him – and that is worship. Every time I deliberately obey His prompting in my heart – I worship Him.

- iii. Worship is based on *koinonia* – deep inward fellowship in the power of the Spirit. This is manifest individually and corporately and is transformational where I become more like Jesus. The discipline of worship seeks God because we love Him, and expresses that love in countless tangible ways throughout each day.
- iv. Richard Foster observes, “worship should be considered a Spiritual Discipline because it is an ordered way of acting and living that sets us before God so He can transform us.” It seeks to still all overtly human initiated activity in preference of a “perpetual, inward, listening silence so that God is the source of our words and actions.”
- v. Discipleship recognizes that Jesus is our present teacher and leader... and we deliberately submit to His tutelage seeking that every aspect of our mind, heart and body come into conformance with Him.
- vi. An excellent way to incorporate this discipline as a regular practice is to seek out a more mature disciple willing to mentor or coach you, and give them the opportunity to speak into your life. It is also wise to have pastors and teachers under whose teaching you are challenged and equipped for service. Monthly, or every other week is a good meeting schedule, especially if you have several people with whom you are meeting regularly.

### 3. **Guidance:**

#### a. The need for guidance:

- i. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, ... it shall be given to him.” Phil. 4:11*
- ii. *“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.” Romans 8:22-27*
- iii. *Divine guidance is the right of all believers sealed by the Spirit of Life.*

#### b. How would you define guidance as a spiritual discipline?

- i. Guidance takes place on different levels: through Scripture; through reason; through circumstances; through friends and disciples; through pastors, coaches and mentors; and through the promptings of the Spirit.
- ii. Guidance has individual, group, and corporate aspects where we observe God leading us as individuals, as a group, and as a body of believers. Moses led Israel as a people. Jesus led and trained 12 individuals symbolic of the 12 tribes of Israel who then led a multitude.
- iii. Guidance has but one objective – to bring people into relationship with God and disciple them into maturity – the perfection of humanity as sons and daughters of God.

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

- iv. To live as individual disciples within community under the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The goal of guidance is to get beyond the fallen nature of humanity and creation unified with God through redemption, and press into the Person of God in the hope of the restoration of creation.
- c. Why would you incorporate guidance as a discipline into your life?
  - i. The individual aspect of guidance involves all aspects of bringing one's life under the leadership and ministry of the Spirit, intent on obedience and worship.
  - ii. The corporate aspect of guidance is more difficult because so many have different visions of what our worldly mission is, of what eternity looks like, and how God's plans play out in redemptive history.
  - iii. Guidance reminds me that God is in charge of everything, while acknowledging that He has given me a role to play in advancing His cause. Guidance seeks to align my life with God's purpose – both here and now and leading toward eternity.
- d. How might you incorporate guidance as a discipline into your life?
  - i. To develop the means to hear and follow God through the leading of the Spirit. This would involve all of the gifts and discipline practices outlined herein into an integrated discipleship paradigm.
  - ii. It would also involve the understanding of the individual and corporate aspects of discipleship. The individual discipleship practices and those of small groups are pretty straight forward, while the corporate aspects are bifurcated between the Body [organism] and the institution [organization] of the church.
    - 1. The organism is the organic body of Christ – sanctified by His Blood, Spirit led and Spirit filled, and already perfect in God's sight.
    - 2. The organization is the institution that allows for the corporate gatherings of the organism. The organization is part of the fallen world order longing to be perfected when Jesus returns.
    - 3. All disciples live in the tension of the "now and not yet" – we now have perfection by the Spirit, and we understand the struggle in the world order that is still awaiting perfection that has not yet occurred.
  - iii. God's goal is to create individuals who are captivated by the love of Jesus and are being transformed into His likeness and nature. To this end – spiritual mentors, coaches, disciplers and directors may encourage us to develop and display all the gifts of the Spirit.
  - iv. God's goal is to create a community that lives under the immediate and total rulership of the Spirit. As such, we are a people blinded to all other loyalties by the impact of the splendor of God. We seek to be a compassionate community embodying the love exemplified by Jesus. To this end we engage in community leadership and followership where we exemplify truth in love and unity in purpose.
  - v. *"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—*

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

*one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.' (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."*

Eph 4:1-16

### 6. **Celebration:**

- a. *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, Rejoice!" Phil. 4:4*
- b. *"That night some shepherds were in the fields outside the village, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terribly frightened, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news of great joy for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem, the city of David! And this is how you will recognize him: You will find a baby lying in a manger, wrapped snugly in strips of cloth!" Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of angels—the armies of heaven—all praising God: 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to all whom God favors'."*  
Luke 2:8-14 NLT
- a. How would you define celebration as a spiritual discipline?
  - i. An intentional choice to look for God in joy and gladness.
  - ii. Choosing to look for the goodness of God, to respond to it and proclaim it to others.
  - iii. Joy and celebration rise out of the inner condition of my heart that knows and loves God for all He has done for me, and rejoices in His amazing love expressed for me. It then passes through me to all I am in contact with.
- b. Why would you incorporate celebration as a discipline into your life?
  - iv. As Christians and especially as authentic disciples joy ought to flow out of my inner being... it ought to be a visible and recognizable aspect of my life.
  - v. It demonstrates the difference between a God focused life and a self focused life – in the world we have troubles, but we can express God's grace into difficult circumstances.
- c. How might you incorporate celebration as a discipline into your life?
  - vi. *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all... because the Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of*

## SF 1.0 – Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines

---

*God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

- vii. The above is so NOT the world. We demonstrate the reality of God in our lives when we live and act accordingly.
- viii. Worship in prayer and music is where Joy is released in my heart.
- ix. Deliberately choosing to be an encourager even when I have a good excuse to be a complainer.
- x. Purpose to recall God's goodness and serve as an active reminder to others.