

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

INFORMATIONAL HANDOUTS

INWARD Disciplines

Avenues for self-reflection, quiet contemplation, growth, and renewal.



BIBLE INTAKE



PRAYER



FASTING



MEDITATION

OUTWARD Disciplines

Avenues for making a positive impact on others and the world.



GENEROSITY



SERVICE



SILENCE & SOLITUDE



SIMPLICITY

CORPORATE Disciplines

Avenues for strengthening our relationships with God and others.



WORSHIP



CELEBRATION



GUIDANCE



CONFESSION

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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MEDITATION

(Adapted from *Celebration of Discipline Resource Guide* by Richard Foster)

“Joy is the keynote of all the Disciplines. The purpose of the Disciplines is liberation from the stifling slavery to self-interest and fear.... The primary requirement is a longing after God.” - Richard J. Foster

BIBLE INTAKE: “The purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person. They aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new life-giving habits. Nowhere is this purpose more clearly seen than in the Discipline of study.” - Richard J. Foster

- We study scripture to understand who God is, what God is like, and how God works with his children.
- **BIBLE INTAKE** ought to be a normal part of life for all Christians, not so much to amass knowledge but to come to a closer relationship with Jesus.
- It is the Holy Spirit who illuminates Scripture for us as we study.
- These are four steps to **BIBLE INTAKE**:
 1. Repetition—repeated exposure.
 2. Concentration—focus, intensity, and intentionality.
 3. Comprehension—the “aha” of deep understanding.
 4. Reflection—considering the significance of what we are studying.
- We study the Bible, but also nature, human experience, and other good Christian teachers.

PRAYER: “True, whole prayer is nothing but love.” - St. Augustine

- **PRAYER** is not a chore but a gift of love between God and us.
- **PRAYER** is not techniques, but about a love relationship that God longs to have with us.
- **PRAYER** is the primary way of enjoying the “with-God life.”
- There are many ways to pray and different **PRAYERS** to use.

- Intercessory **PRAYER** occurs when we love people enough to desire far more for them than we have the power to give, and this desire leads us to **PRAYER**.

FASTING: “Fasting reveals the things that control us....We are not so much abstaining from food as we are feasting on the word of God. Fasting is feasting!” - Richard J. Foster

- **FASTING** is the voluntary denial of food for the sake of intense spiritual activity.
- **FASTING** is not to lose weight—not for vanity.
- **FASTING** makes us more keenly sensitive to the whole of life, so that we do not become obsessed with our consumer mentality.
- We learn as much about the Discipline of **FASTING** through our failures to be able to follow through with **FASTING** as through our successes.
- **FASTING** reminds us of our need to live dependently upon God.

MEDITATION: “The purpose of meditation is to enable us to hear God more clearly. Meditation is listening, sensing, and heeding the life and light of Christ.” - Richard J. Foster

- We **MEDITATE** to quiet our own voice and hear God’s voice and obey his words.
- **MEDITATION** is a listening to God, reflecting on what we hear, and bringing God into our whole lives.
- Reflecting on Scripture and nature can open this process.
- **MEDITATION** can become like a prism for reflecting insights from God.

Go to www.egracechurch.com for resources on how to begin practicing the Corporate Disciplines listed here.

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(Adapted from *Celebration of Discipline Resource Guide* by Richard Foster)

“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.” - Richard J. Foster

SERVICE: “We are called to serve through the many little deaths of going beyond self. And as we live our lives for the good of others, amazingly, we find ourselves.” - Richard J. Foster

- As the cross is the sign of **SUBMISSION**, the towel is the sign of **SERVICE**.
- **SERVICE** is many daily practical “little deaths” of going beyond ourselves.
- The grace of God empowers us to move beyond ourselves and into **SERVICE**.
- **Self-righteous SERVICE:**
 - * Comes through human effort;
 - * Is impressed with the big deal;
 - * Requires external rewards;
 - * Is highly concerned about results;
 - * Picks and chooses whom to serve;
 - * Is affected by moods and whims;
 - * Is temporary;
 - * Is insensitive and insists on meeting a need;
 - * Fractures community.
- **True SERVICE:**
 - * Comes from a relationship with the Holy Spirit;
 - * Does not distinguish the small from the large **SERVICE**;
 - * Likes to hide;
 - * Does not calculate results;
 - * Does not discriminate or judge;
 - * Ministers simply and faithfully because there is a need;
 - * Is a lifestyle;
 - * Can withhold the **SERVICE** as freely as perform it;
 - * Builds community.
- True **SERVICE** gets beyond deserving a reward for our efforts for others.

- **A prayer to serve:** “Lord, lead me today to somebody whom I can serve.”

SILENCE & SOLITUDE: “In stillness our false, busy selves are unmasked and seen for the imposters they truly are.” - Richard J. Foster

- **SILENCE & SOLITUDE** creates an open, empty space where we can be found by God and let go of all competing loyalties.
- **SILENCE & SOLITUDE** teach me to love others for who they are, not what they say.
- **SOLITUDE** and community are a necessary balance.
- In **SILENCE & SOLITUDE** we are not attempting to recharge our batteries so we can win the rat race; in solitude we learn to ignore the rat race altogether.
- **SILENCE & SOLITUDE** helps us learn to be present where we are.
- As we die to ourselves, we can come alive in God.

SIMPLICITY: “Because we lack a divine Center, our need for security has led us to an insane attachment to things.” - Richard J. Foster

- Within us are many selves competing for attention and dominance. As a result, we often feel distracted, torn, and overcommitted.
- Only when we experience our many selves under control of God do we enter into balance and equilibrium in life.
- **SIMPLICITY** means we trust God for our best interests.
- **SIMPLICITY** is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle.
- **SIMPLICITY** produces inner freedom from anxiety when I know:
 - * What I have I receive as a gift from God,
 - * What I have is to be cared for by God,
 - * What I have is available to others,
- **SIMPLICITY** produces these outward actions. We:
 - * Buy things for their usefulness rather than their status.
 - * Reject anything that is producing an addiction in you.
 - * Develop a habit of giving things away.

SUBMISSION: “The most radical social teaching of Jesus was his total reversal of the contemporary notion of greatness. Leadership is found in becoming a servant of all. Power is discovered in submission. The foremost symbol of this radical servanthood is the cross.” - Richard J. Foster

- **SUBMISSION** is the most abused of all the Spiritual Disciplines.
- **SUBMISSION** is laying down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way.
- True **SUBMISSION** is not in the details of who gets his or her way, but in an attitude toward the beloved.
- There are seven acts of **SUBMISSION**: To the Triune God; To the Scripture; To our family; To our neighbors; To the believing community; To the broken and despised; To the world.

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(Adapted from *Celebration of Discipline Resource Guide* by Richard Foster)

“...My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” - Luke 1:46, 47

WORSHIP: “Worship is our response to the overtures of love from the heart of the Father...It is kindled within us only when the Spirit of God touches our human spirit.” - Richard J. Foster

- In true **WORSHIP** every part of the person is involved and affected.
- **WORSHIP** is the greatest thing that human beings can do. It ushers us into the holy of holies, where we are enabled to see the Lord. It brings us into a holy adventure.
- There are two major contexts for **WORSHIP**:
 - * The Context of Common Life --- Consider Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 10:31: “Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.”
 - * The Specifically Religious Context --- In the specifically religious context we utilize liturgies of **WORSHIP**. In every culture there are different liturgies used to experience the Glory of God through Jesus.
- One of the finest means of **WORSHIP** is through music. Music is one of the most important liturgical expressions.

CELEBRATION: “The Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot!” - Augustine of Hippo

- **CELEBRATION** is one of the loveliest of the Spiritual Disciplines.
- Joy is the end result of all the Spiritual Disciplines! When destructive habits in our lives have been conquered, it is joy!
- “The spirit of hurry and the spirit of joy do not reside in the same house.” (Evelyn Underhill)
- Occasions to **CELEBRATE** may include celebrating when a life has been changed (e.g., a drug addiction conquered or a marriage restored); celebrating and redeeming the festivals of our culture (e.g., Halloween as a festival for the great saints of the church, or Thanksgiving and Christmas); and our own occasions for celebration (e.g., family vacations and rites of passage such as birthdays, graduations, weddings, and anniversaries).

- In **CELEBRATION** we also see the other Disciplines also—such as submitting to others' ideas about what constitutes a **CELEBRATION**, or celebrating as the natural expression of our joy in receiving forgiveness.

GUIDANCE: “God has created us for intimate friendship with himself— both now and forever. Jesus came to earth to respond to the universal human need to know how to live well.” - Dallas Willard

- The Discipline of **GUIDANCE** teaches us to discern the voice of the true Shepherd.
- It takes practice to recognize the voice of God.
- These things help us know if it is God who is speaking to us:
 - * Tone of voice — God does not push and condemn; he draws and encourages.
 - * Quality of voice — The voice of God will be like Jesus: gentle and merciful.
 - * Content of voice — God will speak consistently how he has spoken in the past.
- There are two broad categories of **GUIDANCE**: normal and exceptional.
 - * The normal means of **GUIDANCE** are: Scripture, Direct revelation, Divine providence, The Christian community, Personal integrity
 - * The exceptional means of **GUIDANCE** are: Fleeces, Angels, Dreams, Visions, Signs
- Exceptional means of **GUIDANCE** may come because we are hard of hearing.
- The means of **GUIDANCE** work together; one by itself is dangerous.

CONFESSION: “Confession draws us into the divine mystery of redemption. At the heart of God is the desire to give and forgive.” - Richard J. Foster

- On the cross, Jesus took into himself all the dark powers of evil and defeated every one of them by the light of his presence.
- When Jesus said “it is finished” his great work of redemption was completed, the last dregs of the misery of humankind flowed through him and into the care of the Father.
- All the sins of humankind were not just tolerated by God, they were forgiven.
- Confessing sin and receiving forgiveness are realities that heal and transform our inner spirit.
- We are all children of God who together suffer from sin, so we share our **CONFESSION** with one another. Followers of Jesus have the authority to receive **CONFESSION** of others and forgive in Jesus name.
- Three things necessary in **CONFESSION** are: an examination of conscience, sorrow, and a determination to turn from sin.
- Through **CONFESSION** we invite God to move on our heart and show us areas that need his healing.
- **CONFESSION** is specific, and brings an end to our pretenses.

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