

Spiritual Disciplines Exercise

Spiritual disciplines are activities within our power that enable us to accomplish what we cannot do by direct effort. (Dallas Willard)

The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us. (Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline)

Disciplines of Abstinence¹: Many disciplines involve the choice to deny ourselves a want or need in a conscious effort to make time and space for deeper connection with God. While many things could be included in this list, here are a few of the classic disciplines of abstinence:

- **Silence:** Choosing to quiet our mouths, our minds, and often our bodies in order to settle our souls in God's presence.
- **Solitude:** Separating from other people in order to be alone with God.
- **Sabbath:** Ceasing work in order to rest in God's person and provision.
- **Fasting:** Choosing to abstain from food, technology, media, or some other comfort out of a desire for more focused time in God's presence.
- **Chastity:** turning away from dwelling upon or engaging in the sexual dimension of our relationships to others—even our spouse for an agreed upon time period.
- **Frugality/Simplicity:** Abstaining from the use of goods or money at our disposal. Choosing not to gratify our desires for status, glamor, or luxury.
- **Sacrifice:** Forsaking the security of meeting our own needs with what is in our hands.
- **Secrecy:** Choosing to curate and cherish a secret list of good deeds not made public, gossip not passed on, terse replies not offered, personal accomplishments not catalogued in order to allow others to be the focus of attention as we find sufficiency in God alone.

Disciplines of Engagement¹: Many disciplines involve the conscious choice to engage other people and God in specific ways.

- **Study:** Engaging our minds with an objective order, especially the Word of God, in order to be shaped by or formed by that order.
- **Worship:** Focused time exalting the person, power, goodness, and beauty of God through words, music, prayer, silence, liturgy, etc...
- **Celebration:** Enjoying ourselves, our life, our work, and our world—understanding that all good comes as a gift from God—and reflecting that joy to others and back to God.
- **Prayer:** Conversing with God about what we're experiencing and doing together. Prayer almost always involves other disciplines (study, meditation, worship, solitude, fasting)
- **Confession:** Letting trusted others know our deepest weaknesses and failures in order to nourish our faith in God's grace and loving provision for our needs.
- **Spiritual Friendship:** Investing in meaningful friendships with other followers of Jesus for the purpose of mutual encouragement, support, and accountability.
- **Personal Reflection:** Paying careful attention to our inner world in order to grow in knowledge of self, love for others, and love for God.
- **Sacrificial Service:** Choosing to step toward the pain and/or need of another with the intention of providing service and comfort even if it be at our own cost.
- **Fellowship:** Engaging in the common activities of worship, study, prayer, celebration, and service with other disciples of Jesus.
- **Submission:** Consciously choosing to do what others think best, setting aside the desired supremacy of our own ideas, the primacy of our own will, and totally eliminating self-promotion. This is the highest level of fellowship.

¹ Definitions adapted from the works of Dallas Willard
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Richard Foster separates the basic spiritual disciplines into *three* helpful categories. His list below is largely similar to the above, but accounts for the fact that some disciplines are more corporate while others are more individual. (From Foster's book, *Celebration of Discipline*)

<p>The <i>inward</i> disciplines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meditation • Prayer • Fasting • Study 	<p>The <i>outward</i> disciplines (inward realities resulting in outward lifestyles)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplicity • Solitude • Submission • Service 	<p>The <i>corporate</i> disciplines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confession • Worship • Guidance • Celebration
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My personal experience:

Disciplines I have found beneficial:	Disciplines I would like to try: