



THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

HPC Adult Sunday School

The Christian Life



WHAT IS A “SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE”?

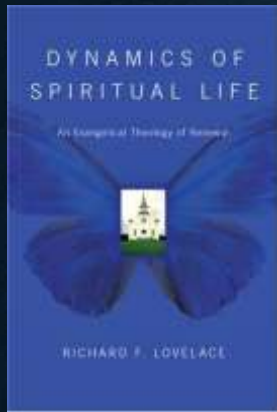
- “...those personal or corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the **habits of devotion** and experiential Christianity that have been practiced by the people of God since biblical times.” ~ Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, p. 17.
- “Deliberately 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...Spiritual exercises to develop ‘**Sacred Rhythms**’ to engage in intentional spirituality in the pursuit of intimacy with God.” ~ Authentic Discipleship, *Introduction to the Spiritual Disciplines*, p. 1.
- “The Disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that He can transform us. ... They are **God’s means of grace**.” ~ Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, p. 7.



SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

WHY SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

- **Experience** liberation from slavery to self and fear
- **Pursue** spiritual maturity and godliness
- **Cultivate** inward spiritual renewal
- **Participate** in outward spiritual renewal
- * **Share** in communal and social spiritual renewal
- **Obey** the Great Commandment: **love** God and neighbor
- **Glorify** God and **enjoy** him forever



SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

- History consistently reveals the necessary ingredients of personal, communal, and societal renewal that God chooses to bless with his reviving Spirit.
 - **Preconditions** (preparation for the gospel)
 - **Primary elements** (deep presentation of the gospel)
 - **Secondary elements** (outwork of the gospel in the Church's life)
- * Spiritual Renewal Source: Richard Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*



PRECONDITIONS FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

- Summarized as a **preparation** for the gospel
 1. An awareness of the **holiness of God**, particularly in God's love and justice
 2. An awareness of the **depth of sin**, particularly in your own life and in the life of your community
- The history of spiritual renewals teaches that without these preexisting conditions in persons and/or entire communities of Christians, God has never acted to bring spiritual renewal.



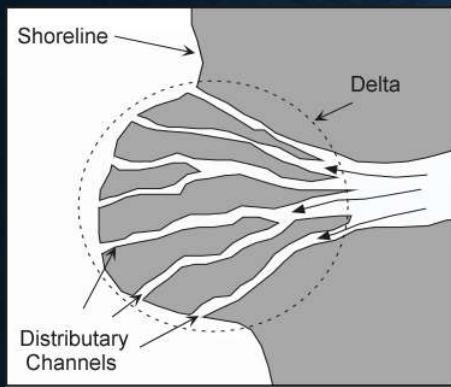
PRIMARY ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

- Summarized as a **deeper understanding** of the gospel message of the Christian's union with Christ
 1. **Justification**: you are accepted in Christ
 2. **Sanctification**: you are free from the bondage of sin in Christ
 3. **Spirit-filled**: you are not alone in Christ
 4. **Spirit-empowered**: you have spiritual authority in Christ
- Only by re-grounding in the gospel and sinking down strong roots capable of weathering the world, the flesh, and the devil, can the Christian and the Church experience renewal by God's sovereign blessing.



SECONDARY ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

- Summarized as the **outworking** of the gospel in the Church's life
- 1. **Mission**: following Christ into the world, presenting his gospel in both proclamation and social demonstration
- 2. **Prayer**: expressing dependence on the power of his Spirit both individually and corporately
- 3. **Community**: being in union with his body in both micro- and macro-communities
- 4. **Disenculturation**: being freed from cultural binds that are either destructive or protective in nature
- 5. **Theological integration**: having the mind of Christ toward both revealed truth and your culture



SPIRITUAL RENEWAL AND THE DELTA EFFECT

- Why has spiritual renewal (in American communities and society in general) been elusive since the Second Great Awakening?
- Why do Christians tend to neglect, dismiss, or denigrate certain elements of spiritual renewal that history teaches are necessary for renewal?
- The answer may be largely due to the **breakup of Classical Evangelicalism** (the Delta Effect)
- If the “**Delta Effect**” is inhibiting spiritual renewal, then a rebuilding of Classical Evangelicalism is necessary

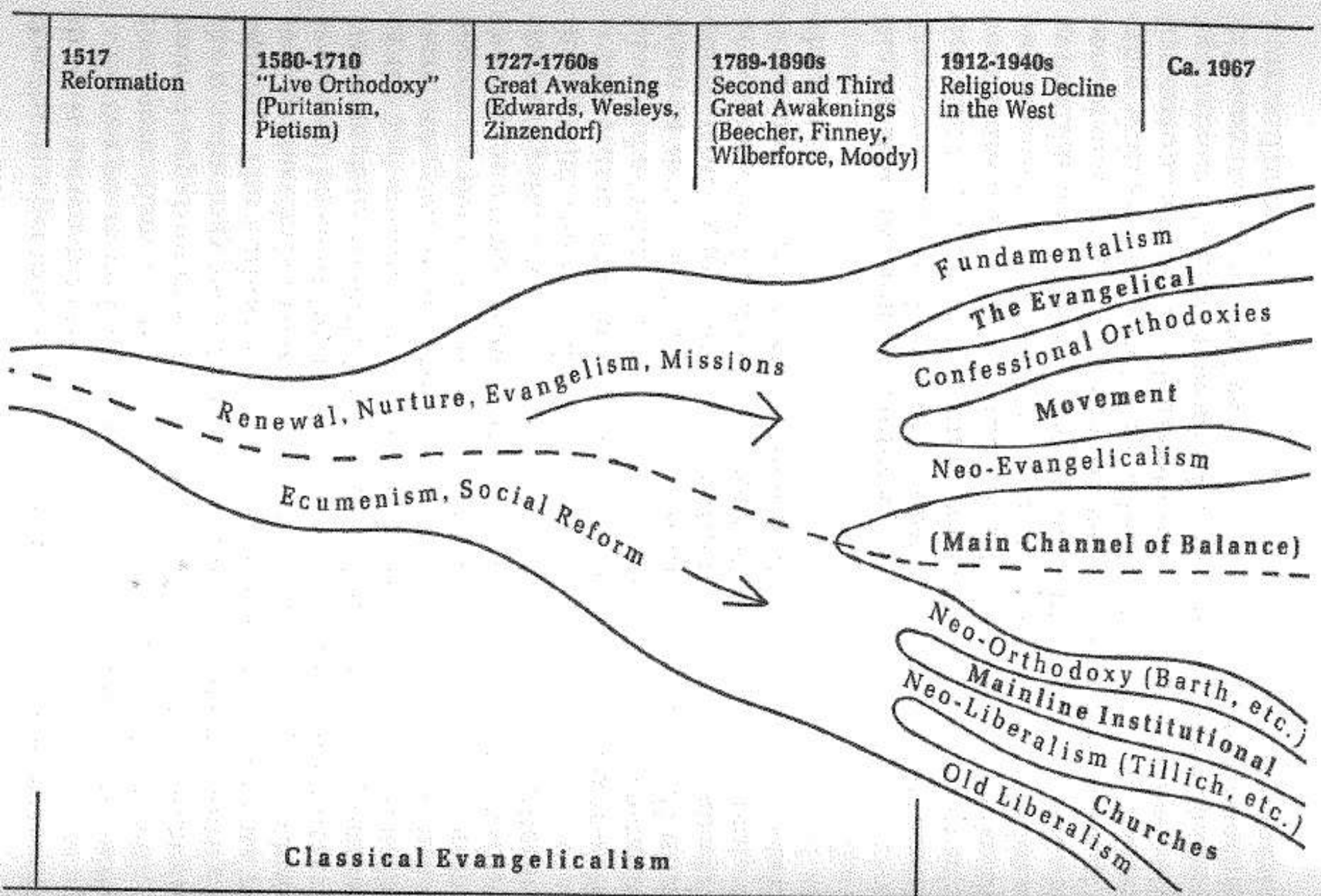


Figure 2. Classical Evangelicalism and the Delta Effect



DANGERS OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Some view the spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, Bible study, stewardship, worship, fasting, tithing, serving) as a set of laws that Christians must shoulder after the gospel is believed. This view manifests itself in various forms.

- **Pride.** “I can do these! Therefore God rates me better than others.”
- **Fear.** “I can’t do these! Therefore God does not love me.”
- **Legalism.** “I must do these! Therefore God is keeping score with me.”
- **Externalism.** “I will perform these! Therefore God will be satisfied with me.”
- **Manipulation.** “I will do these! Therefore God will bless me.”



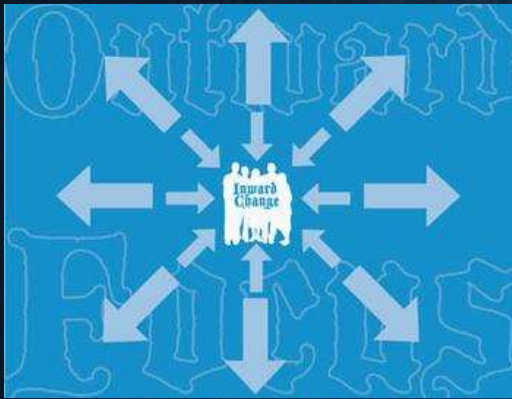
BENEFITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- All gospel benefits included in our union with Christ are cultivated, sown, reaped, and tasted in pursuing God through the practice of the spiritual disciplines
- **Fruit of the Spirit:** love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control
- **Marks of a disciple:** witness, discipler, steward, child of God, light
- **Benefits flowing from salvation:** assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, perseverance in grace to the end of the race



WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

- Meditation
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Study
- Simplicity
- Silence
- Submission
- Fellowship
- Spiritual Friendship
- Service & Giving
- Confession
- Worship
- Guidance
- Celebration
- Evangelism
- Journaling
- Chastity
- Holy Communion
- Solitude
- Stewardship
- Bible Reading
- Sabbath
- Discernment
- Discipling
- Hospitality
- Gratitude
- Etc, etc, etc



CATEGORIES OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Categorized by General Duty:

- Worship
- Open Myself to God
- Relinquish the False Self
- Share My Life With Others
- Hear God's Word
- Incarnate the Love of Christ
- Pray

Categorized by General Direction:

- Inward
- Outward
- Communal

Categorized by General Activity:

- Abstinence
- Engagement



EMPHASIZED SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- Which delta stream in the Classical Evangelicalism River do you most identify with?
 - Evangelical Movements: Fundamentalism, Confessional Orthodoxy, Neo-evangelicalism
 - Mainline Institutional Churches: Old Liberalism, Neo-liberalism, Neo-orthodoxy
- Which directional emphasis do you lean toward in living as a Christian?
 - Knowing (doctrine, Bible content, answers to difficult questions)
 - Being (spiritual, prayerful, quietly present with God)
 - Doing (service, activism, justice)
- Answering these two questions will reveal to some degree of predictability which spiritual disciplines you emphasize

IGNORE
ME AT YOUR
OWN RISK

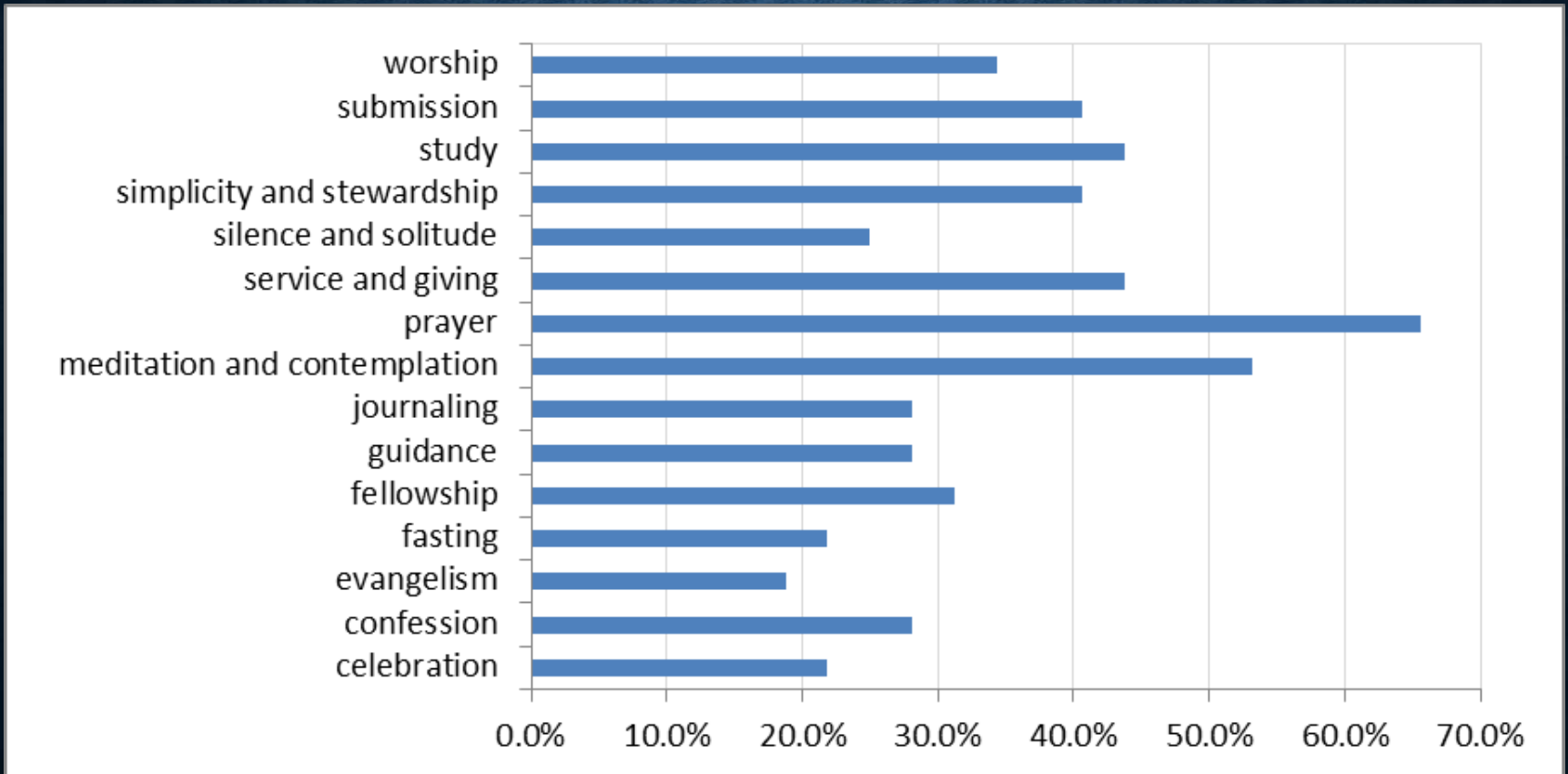
NEGLECTED SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- People tend to gravitate toward certain spiritual disciplines while neglecting others. It's difficult to discipline yourself to do something you consider unpleasant, unfulfilling, unnecessary, or even harmful!
- Which neglected spiritual disciplines do you **desire** to consider and practice more deliberately?
- Which spiritual disciplines do you **not desire (but sense you should)** to consider and practice more deliberately?
- Let's take an anonymous class survey



SURVEY RESULTS

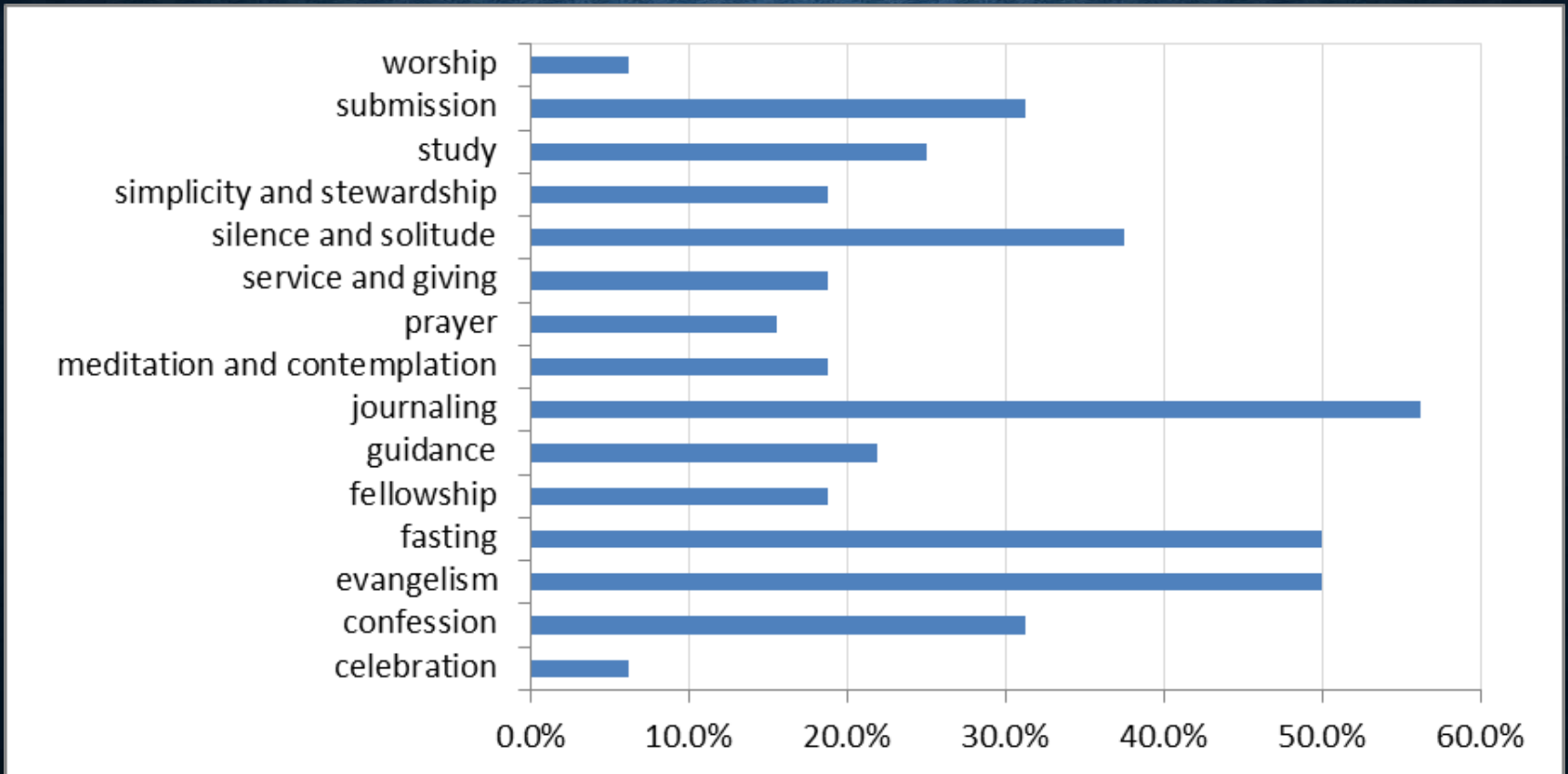
- Which neglected spiritual disciplines do you **desire** to consider and practice more deliberately?





SURVEY RESULTS

- Which spiritual disciplines do you **not desire (but sense you should)** to consider and practice more deliberately?





CONCENTRATING ON A FEW SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- Neglected spiritual disciplines you **desire** to consider and practice more deliberately
 - Prayer
 - Meditation & Contemplation
 - Study
 - Service & Giving
- Neglected spiritual disciplines you **do not desire (but sense you should)** to consider and practice more deliberately
 - Journaling
 - Fasting
 - Evangelism
 - Silence & Solitude



DIRECTIONAL ASSESSMENT

- “Inward” disciplines won the vote (5 of the top 8)
 - Prayer (66% **desire**)
 - Meditation & Contemplation (53% **desire**)
 - Study (44% **desire**)
 - Journaling (56% **should desire**)
 - Fasting (50% **should desire**)
- “Outward” disciplines came in second place (3 of the top 8)
 - Evangelism (50% **should desire**)
 - Silence & Solitude (38% **should desire**)
 - Service & Giving (44% **desire**)
- Votes reflect an emphasis on individual (6 of the top 8) rather than communal disciplines. Is our faith practice too individualistic?



DIRECTIONAL ASSESSMENT

- “Corporate” disciplines received the **lowest vote totals**
 - Worship (34% desire; 6% should desire)
 - Fellowship (31% desire; 19% should desire)
 - Confession (28% desire, 31% should desire)
 - Guidance (28% desire; 22% should desire)
 - Celebration (22% desire; 6% should desire)
- It seems all the “corporate” disciplines received significant vote percentages **except Celebration**
 - Does this mean we put a high value on celebrating together, and are doing well in this spiritual discipline?
 - Or does this mean we put a low value on celebrating together?



INWARD SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

“The inward area is the first place of loss of true Christian life, of true spirituality, and the outward sinful act is the result.” ~ Francis Schaeffer



PRAYER

“Thus prayer is the precious fruit of the Word—Word of God that has become wholly our own and in that way has been inscribed deep in our body and our psyche, and that now can become our response to the Love of the Father. The Spirit stammers it out in our heart, without our doing anything about it. It bubbles up, it flows, it runs like living water. It is no longer we who pray, but the prayer prays itself in us. The divine life of the risen Christ ripples softly in our heart.” ~ André Louf



SCRIPTURE ON THE NEED FOR PRAYER

The Bible says you need to pray

- **Luke 5:15-16** But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.
- **Acts 6:4** But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.
- **Colossians 4:2** Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.
- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.



CHRISTIANS ON THE NEED FOR PRAYER

Mature Christians say you need to pray

- “Prayer—secret, fervent, believing prayer—lies at the root of all personal godliness” ~ **William Carey**
- “Prayer is to religion what original research is to science.”
P.T. Forsythe
- “What the church needs today is not more or better machinery, not new organizations, or more novel methods; but men whom the Holy Spirit can use – men of prayer, men mighty in prayer.” ~ **E.M. Bounds**
- “The thermometer of a church is its prayer meeting.” ~ **Vance Havner**



DEFINING PRAYER

What is prayer?

- Prayer is an **offering up of our desires unto God**, in the name of Christ, by the help of his Spirit; with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies. (WLC 178)
- It is **God's chosen method of access into His presence**, where we encounter Him relationally and are comforted, directed, and strengthened.
- 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).

Source: Authentic Discipleship, Intro to Spiritual Disciplines



DISCIPLINE YOURSELF TO PRAY

Why should you discipline yourself to pray?

- Because **prayer is the most important part of the thankfulness which God requires of us**. Moreover, God will give His grace and the Holy Spirit only to those who constantly and with heartfelt longing ask Him for these gifts and thank Him for them. (HC 116)
- **Jesus instructs** us to pray, and **the Bible teaches** we should pray without ceasing.
- All relationships require **strategic planning, intentionality** and **regularity** to flourish. Relating to God is no different.
- Without discipline pray becomes **minimal** and **marginal**.



FORMS OF PRAYER

- **Discursive.** Ongoing spoken words addressed to God while you are doing life.
- **Mental.** Unspoken words in your mind addressed to God whenever God prompts you to seek him or his guidance.
- **Centering.** Calmly quieting your mind to focus more closely on God and shift your perspective to the spiritual realm.
- **Scriptural.** Slowly reading a Bible verse or passage, pausing to dwell on a word or phrase that jumps out at you, and praying the words and your thoughts back to God.
- **Fixed.** Using a prayer book to methodically guide your addressing and listening to God through recitation and exploration (e.g., The Daily Office; The Valley of Vision)



PURPOSES OF PRAYER

- **Praise.** Tell God how great he is, and why he is so great.
- **Confession.** Admit your sin, repent, and accept forgiveness.
- **Complaint.** Pour out (lament) your desire for justice or relief.
- **Worship.** Bow in praise with your whole being before God.
- **Submission.** Yield your will to God, resolving to follow him.
- **Relinquishment.** Give your life (even in specifics) over to God.
- **Request.** Ask God to provide your needs, wants, and desires.
- **Guidance.** Seek wisdom and direction for a particular decision.
- **Intercession.** Pray any of the above for (or on behalf of) others.



CULTIVATING THE DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

1. **Repent** of Poor Prayer
2. **Set** a Realistic Goal
3. **Follow** an Agreeable Method
4. **Schedule** a Doable Time
5. **Submit** to Accountability (find a prayer partner/group)
6. **Pray** in the Spirit
7. **Evaluate** Spiritual Growth
8. **Repeat** the Cycle



MEMORY TOOLS FOR PRAYER

- **A.C.T.S.**

- Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication

- **P.R.A.Y.**

- Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield

- **P.R.A.I.S.E.**

- Praise, Repent, Ask, Intercede, Speak the Word, Enjoy God's Presence


- **S.A.L.T.** (remember through song!)

- Spiritual Fruit, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments



MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION

“Why do we think of the gift of contemplation, infused contemplation, mystical prayer, as something essentially strange and esoteric reserved for a small class of almost unnatural beings and prohibited to everyone else? It is perhaps because we have forgotten that contemplation is the work of the Holy Ghost acting on our souls through His gifts of Wisdom and Understanding with special intensity to increase and perfect our love for Him. **These gifts are part of the normal equipment of Christian sanctity.**” ~ Thomas Merton



SCRIPTURE ON THE NEED FOR MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION

The Bible says you need to meditate and contemplate

- **Joshua 1:8** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.
- **Psalm 77:3, 6, 12** When I remember God, I moan; when I meditate, my spirit faints. ... I said, "Let me remember my song in the night; let me meditate in my heart." ... I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.
- **Psalm 119:15** I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways.
- **Psalm 145:5** On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.



CHRISTIANS ON THE NEED FOR MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION

Mature Christians say you need to meditate and contemplate

- “...just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did. That is all. That is meditation.” ~ **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**
- “The most important thing I had to do was to read the Word of God and to meditate on it. Thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprovved, and instructed.” ~ **George Müller**
- “If I have observed anything by experience, it is this: a man may take the measure of his growth and decay in grace according to his thoughts and meditations upon the person of Christ, and the glory of Christ’s Kingdom, and of His love.” ~ **John Owen**



DEFINING MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION

What are meditation and contemplation?

- Meditation and contemplation are where we create the emotional and spiritual space where **God engages us through our imagination.**
- 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.
- Contemplation is the act of **dwelling upon God Himself** for the purpose of knowing Him more fully and relating to Him more intimately.



THE PURPOSE OF MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION

Why meditation and contemplation?

- 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**.
- 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**.



HOW TO PRACTICE MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION

How to discipline yourself to meditate and contemplate?

- **Meditation**: After reading Scripture, internalize and personalize it. Allow your mind to search the text. **Eat and digest** God's Word.
- **Contemplation**: After reading Scripture passages that reveal God's character, **ponder God**, asking him to reveal himself to you. For passages in which people encounter God, ponder their response and what God revealed to them.
- 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**



PRACTICAL TIPS FOR MEDITATION & CONTEMPLATION

How can you cultivate meditation and contemplation?

- **Plan a time** for it. Commit a day, time, timeframe and place.
- **Organize and structure** your time
- **Minimize distractions**
 - Tune out
 - Log off
 - Hang up
 - Say goodbye
 - Keep pen and paper nearby to note for later those important (but distracting) things that come to mind



STUDY

“Many Christians remain in bondage to fears and anxieties simply because they do not avail themselves of the Discipline of study. They may be faithful in church attendance and earnest in fulfilling their religious duties, and still they are not changed...They may sing with gusto, pray in the Spirit, live as obediently as they know, even receive divine visions and revelations, and yet the tenor of their lives remains unchanged. Why? Because they have never taken up one of the central ways God uses to change us: study.” ~ Richard Foster



SCRIPTURE ON THE NEED FOR STUDY

The Bible says you need to study

- **Ezra 7:10** For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.
- **Nehemiah 8:13** On the second day the heads of fathers' houses of all the people, with the priests and the Levites, came together to Ezra the scribe in order to study the words of the Law.
- **Romans 12:2** Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- **2 Timothy 2:15** Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.



CHRISTIANS ON THE NEED FOR STUDY

Mature Christians say you need to study

- “Unless we read the Word of God, we cannot be instructed by the Spirit, and unless we are instructed by the Spirit, we cannot become godly and effective servants. To put it another way, loving the Word, learning from the Word, and living out the Word are interlocked in God's plan for our spiritual growth.” ~ **David L. McKenna**
- “God is the author of the Bible, and only the truth it contains will lead people to true happiness. A Christian should read this precious Book every day with earnest prayer and meditation. But like many believers, I preferred to read the works of uninspired men rather than the oracles of the living God. Consequently, I remained a spiritual baby both in knowledge and grace.” ~ **George Müller**



DEFINING STUDY

What is study?

- A means of knowing God and learning His truths and priorities through **carefully paying attention to the message of Scripture.**
- A way of becoming closer to one you love. Knowing about God is **a way of falling more deeply in love with him.**
- If the essence of contemplation is devotional, and the essence of meditation is developmental, then study is **essentially analytical.**



TYPICAL STUDY

What does study involve? Any combination of...

- **Regular reading of Scripture** to learn the shape of redemptive history
- A **book study** to see how a particular biblical book fits into the plan of redemption
- A **topical/doctrinal study** to answer pressing questions in your mind or heart
- A **verse/word study** to focus on a particular aspect of God's truth

Source: Authentic Discipleship, Intro to Spiritual Disciplines



LOOK & FEEL OF STUDY

What does study look & feel like? Any combination of...

- **Repetition** or repeated input of texts, thoughts, and ideas
- **Concentration** or focused thought
- **Comprehension** or enlightened understanding
- **Reflection** by engaging in contemplation to see things from different perspectives and lights



DISCIPLINE YOURSELF TO STUDY

Why should you discipline yourself to study?

- It is a way of **encouraging the spiritual transformation** God has started within you.
- Merely believing the truth someone has told you has limited spiritual value. Study necessitates your own exploration to **learn and see the truth for yourself**.
- In discovering and claiming the truth for yourself, not only are you transformed by it, but you are also **better equipped** to give an account of your faith to others.
- Christians are called to lead (disciple) others in the school of Christ. **If you don't read, you can't lead.**



HOW TO STUDY INDIVIDUALLY

Incorporate **Bible** study into your **inward life**

- **Devotional** reading
 - Dip into a passage to **feel and enjoy** it
- **Canonical** reading
 - Swim the whole Bible to **taste** it
 - Dive into one biblical book repeatedly to **digest** it
- **Logical** reading
 - Outline the structure of a passage to **grasp** it
 - Submit to a passage to **apply** it
- **Investigative** reading
 - Follow a theme to **connect** it



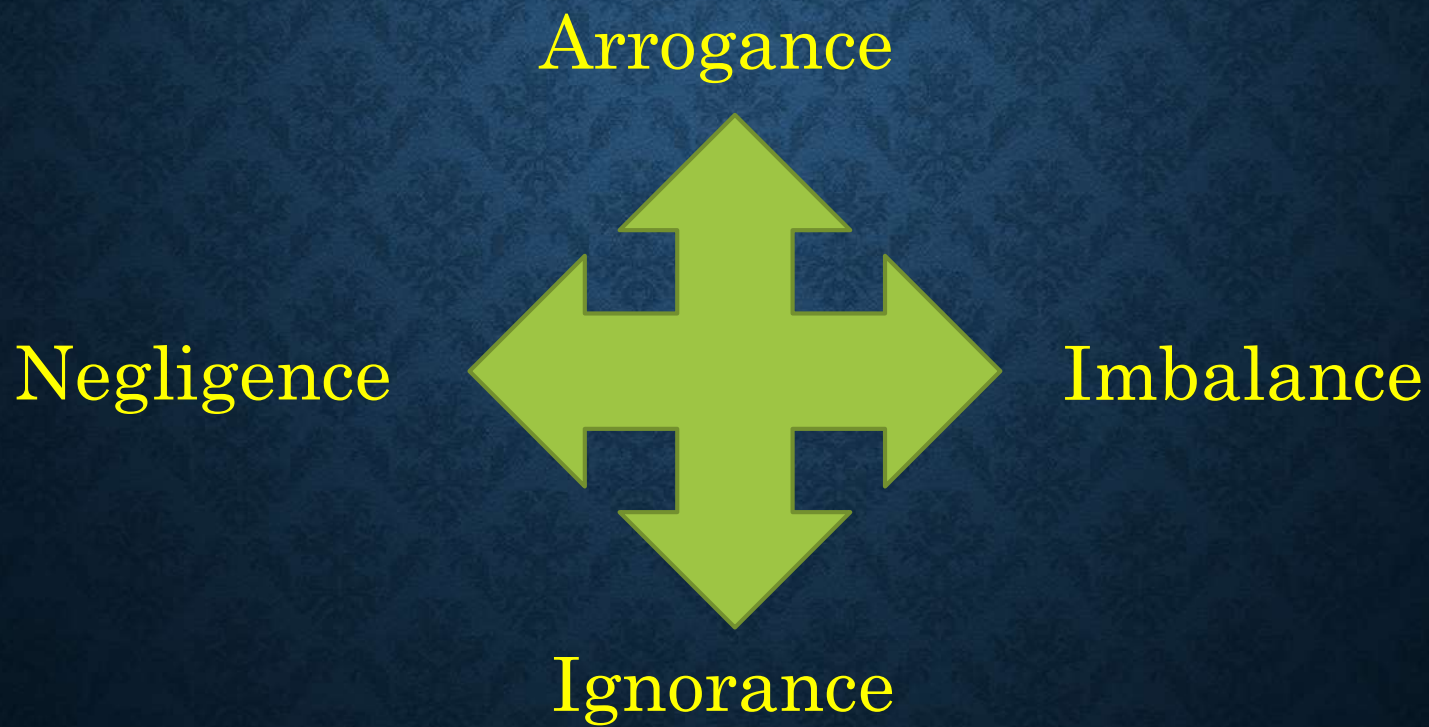
HOW TO STUDY INDIVIDUALLY

Incorporate “secondary source” study into your inward life

- **Choose your sources** very carefully. Get advice from mature, knowledgeable, and trustworthy Christians. Learn to discern.
- **Build** a spiritual reference library
- **Pursue** study with an end to serve others and glorify God, never as an end in itself or to tickle your spiritual fancy
- **Talk** about what you learn with others



STUDY PITFALLS





SUGGESTED DISCIPLESHIP SOURCES

First step “secondary source” studies for your **inward life**

- A doctrinally- and exegetically-designed Study Bible
- A discipleship-focused magazine, website or app
- Church confession and catechism
- A hymnal
- Christian audio/video of class lectures, sermons, talks, conferences, podcasts
- **Suggestions?**



HOW TO STUDY CORPORATELY

How to incorporate study into your **corporate life**?

- **Premise 1**: All inward disciplines **need** expression and interaction in community because discipleship is best accomplished in community.
- **Premise 2**: Bible study is **fundamental** for disciples.
- **Conclusion**: Regular study of the Scriptures with others is necessary and fundamental.
- **Application**: Commit to regular participation in a **group** where Bible study is practiced in a community of sharing and interaction.

Source: Authentic Discipleship, Intro to Spiritual Disciplines



JOURNALING

“Why, then, do I set before You an ordered account of so many things? It's certainly not through me that You know them. But I'm stirring up love for You in myself and in those who read this so that we may all say, great is the Lord and highly worthy to be praised. **I tell my story for love of Your love.**” ~ St. Augustine



A CASE FOR JOURNALING

But...many godly people did not keep a journal, and the Bible does not require it, so why is journaling counted as a spiritual discipline? Jesus did not practice journaling. Sola Scriptura!

- Something very much like journaling is **modeled in Scripture**
- **God has blessed** the discipline of journaling since biblical times
- Believers throughout church history have found journal-keeping a **great catalyst** to their spiritual growth in grace
- Journaling not only promotes spiritual growth by means of its own virtues but it is also a **valuable aid** to the other spiritual disciplines



SCRIPTURE ON THE BLESSING OF JOURNALING

Indirectly, the Bible **encourages** you to practice journaling (there is **no command or requirement** to keep a journal).

- **King David** recorded many of his spiritual thoughts in the Psalms:

Psalms 86:1-4, 16-17 Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Preserve my life, for I am godly; save your servant, who trusts in you--you are my God. Be gracious to me, O Lord, for to you do I cry all the day. Gladden the soul of your servant, for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. Turn to me and be gracious to me; give your strength to your servant, and save the son of your maidservant. Show me a sign of your favor, that those who hate me may see and be



SCRIPTURE ON THE BLESSING OF JOURNALING

- The prophet **Jeremiah** recorded his spiritual thoughts while observing Jerusalem's destruction in Lamentations:

Lamentations 3:18-26 "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD." Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.



CHRISTIANS ON THE BLESSING OF JOURNALING

Mature Christians say you **ought** to practice journaling.

- “A spiritual diary will tend to **deepen and sanctify the emotional life** of a child of God. There is great value to us of becoming more deeply emotional over the great issues of our faith. Our age is not deep enough in feelings. Biblical men are depicted as weeping copious tears, as sighing and groaning, as on occasion rejoicing with ecstasy. They were ravished by the very idea of God...It is our shame to be so cold, unfeeling and unemotional in spite of all that God has done to us and for us in Christ...The keeping of a diary might help to put us right in this respect also.” ~ Maurice Roberts



CHRISTIANS ON THE BLESSING OF JOURNALING

- “More than almost any other Discipline, journaling has a fascinating appeal with nearly all who hear about it. One reason is the way journaling **blends biblical doctrine and daily living**, like the confluence of two great rivers, into one. And since each believer’s journey down life’s river involves bends and hazards previously unexplored by them on the way to the Celestial City, something about journaling this journey appeals to the adventuresome spirit of Christian growth.” ~ Donald Whitney



DEFINING JOURNALING

What is a journal?

- A book or written record in which a person may keep a variety of things, and the **interpretation** of all these from his own **spiritual perspective**.
- A place where **spontaneous devotional thoughts** and **lengthy theological musings** can be preserved.
- A diary recording **any and every aspect** of your spiritual life.
- A written repository of **what God is teaching you**, including sermon/study notes, questions, prayers (including requests and answers), responses to pre-prepared reflection questions (from a personal or group study book), and your meditations and contemplations on them.



THE PURPOSE OF JOURNALING

Journaling is a proven **help** to pursuing other spiritual disciplines*

- Help in **self-understanding & evaluation**
- Help in **expressing thoughts & feelings** to God
- Help in **remembering the Lord's works** as they intersect life
- Help in **clarifying and articulating** insights and impressions
- Help in **monitoring** spiritual goals and priorities

* Prayer, meditation & contemplation, study, fasting, evangelism, silence & solitude, simplicity & stewardship, service & giving, submission, worship, confession, guidance, celebration

Source: Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*



TYPES OF JOURNALING

Various types of journaling fall on a **spectrum**.

Utilizing one type is not a limitation or commitment to your journaling.

- Private and/or Public
 - Absolutely private
 - Privately shared
 - Public
- Daily and/or Occasional
- Diary and/or Notebook
- Written and/or Typed
- Prose and/or Poetry
- Verbal and/or Multimedia
- Travel and/or Homebound



FAMOUS SPIRITUAL JOURNALS FROM HISTORY

- St. Augustine, *Confessions*
- Teresa of Avila, *Life*
- Various Puritan-era Christians, *The Valley of Vision*
- Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*
- David Brainerd, *Diary and Journal*
- George Fox, *Journal*
- Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain*
- Henri Nouwen, *Genesee Diary* and *The Road to Daybreak*
- Jim Elliot, *Journals*



FORMS OF JOURNALING

- Old-fashioned **pen and paper**
 - Bound, spiral, or pad notebook
 - Loose-leaf or ring-bound notebook
- **Informal or formal** language, format, structure, penmanship
- **Electronic documents** saved on your computer, smart phone, or tablet
- **Email** journal entries to yourself
- **Personal blog** on the internet
- Facebook or similar **social media**



BLESSINGS OF JOURNALING

- **Improves coherent thinking and expression** as you focus on one thought at a time
- **Creates a cache of mature thoughts** to return to when needed
- **Increases faith and trust** as you record your journey with God. Reminds you of things forgotten, questioned, or doubted, and how you've grown spiritually.
- **Focuses and testifies** to all the benefits that flow from other spiritual disciplines as they are linked to and pursued through journaling
- Creates and preserves **a written spiritual heritage**



HOW TO PRACTICE JOURNALING

Your way is the right way for you

- For **loose-leaf journaling**, keep paper and pen handy all the time, wherever you go
- For **bound notebook journaling**, keep your journal front and center at your writing spot, taking it with you when desired
- Take your journal (or paper to insert into your journal) to church, to Bible study meeting, to home group meeting, and to Christian class. **Use it for note taking.**
- **Don't fall into the trap** of treating your journal like a Ming vase. Your journal may be serious and silly, lengthy and brief, polished or rough, neat or messy, used regularly or occasionally.



STARTING A JOURNAL

For those who need a **little practical advice** getting started:

- As a starting entry for each day, try listing the one verse or idea from your Bible reading that impressed you most. Meditate on that for a few minutes, then record your insights and impressions. From there consider adding recent events in your life and your feelings and responses to them, brief prayers, joys, successes, failures, quotations, etc.



FASTING

“Christian fasting is a test to see what desires control us. Fasting reveals the measure of food’s mastery over us—or television or computers or whatever we submit to again and again to conceal the weakness of our hunger for God. A real lived-out human act of preference for God over His gifts is the actual lived-out glorification of God’s excellence for which He created the world. **Fasting is not the only way, or the main way, that we glorify God in preferring Him above His gifts. But it is one way.**” ~ John Piper



SCRIPTURE ON THE NEED FOR FASTING

Jesus says you need to fast

- **Matthew 6:16-18** And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.
- **Matthew 9:14-15** Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will



SCRIPTURE ON THE NEED FOR FASTING

NT examples of Christians fasting

- **Acts 9:8-9** Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.
- **Acts 13:1-3** Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.
- **Acts 14:23** And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.



CHRISTIANS ON THE NEED FOR FASTING

Mature Christians say you need to fast

- “One way to begin to see how vastly indulgent we usually are is to fast. It is a long day that is not broken by the usual three meals. One finds out what an astonishing amount of time is spent in the planning, purchasing, preparing, eating, and cleaning up of meals.” ~ Elizabeth Elliot
- “By fasting, the body learns to obey the soul; by praying the soul learns to command the body.” ~ William Secker
- “Fasting helps express, deepens, confirms the resolution that we are ready to sacrifice anything, even ourselves, to attain what we seek for the kingdom of God.” ~ Andrew Murray



DEFINING FASTING

What is fasting?

- **Abstaining** from something valuable (usually food) **to take hold** of something of far greater spiritual value.
- The strategic refusal or ritual rejection of something I need or desire **to focus on God** supplying my needs and wants. A fast is **NOT a hunger strike** against God or for a humanitarian cause.
- Intentionally **denying and controlling my physical desires and sensitivity** to increase my spiritual strength and sensitivity
- The **denial of an otherwise normal function** for the sake of intense spiritual activity and to sharpen our spiritual awareness
- It is **always voluntary**; never compelled by command, force, or threat

Source: Authentic Discipleship, Intro to Spiritual Disciplines



EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL FASTING

1. To seek to **avert God's judgment and displeasure** against His people (1 Sam 7:6; Joel 2:12; Jonah 3:5-8; Jud 20:26; 1 Kgs 21:9; Jer 36:6, 9)
2. To seek God's protection and blessing **in preparation for war** (2 Chr 20:1-4; Joel 2:15)
3. To seek God's help **for deliverance** from personal troubles and opposition (1 Kgs 21:27-29).
4. To express **heartfelt repentance and humility** before God (Neh 9:1-2; Ps 35:13; Dan 9:3; Joel 2:12-13; Jonah 3:5-8)
5. To show or express **mourning, sorrow, deep grief, and sadness** (1 Sam 20:34; 31:13; 2 Sam 1:12; 12:15-23)



EXAMPLES OF BIBLICAL FASTING

6. To request that God provide **traveling mercies** (Ezra 8:21-23)
7. To express **one's concern for the success of God's work** (Neh 1:3-4; Dan 9:3)
8. To **humble and rebuke us** as it reveals how much of our happiness depends on the external pleasures of eating (Ps 69:10)
9. To teach us **self-control and self-discipline** (Phil 3:19; Rom 16:18; 1 Cor 9:25-27)



THE PURPOSE OF FASTING

- 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
- As **preparation** for a major **decision** or embarking on a new **venture** or to strengthen my spirit for a new **ordeal**
- To **counter** fleshly and worldly conformity for the purpose of preparing to **engage** our world that encourages physical pleasures and worldly emphasis
- To **strengthen** spiritual sensitivity and **prepare** for spiritual warfare
- To **reveal and release** your unrecognized idols (controlling sins)



TYPES OF FASTS

1. **Normal.** Abstain from all food, but not from water or juice.
2. **Partial.** Abstain from certain types of food or drink. Eat much smaller portions and/or only a few simple foods.
3. **Absolute.** Abstain from all food and liquid, even water.
4. **Supernatural.** Extended abstention from all food and liquid as directly aided by God (e.g., the cases of Moses and Elijah)
5. **Abnormal.** Sacrificially abstain from something amoral that is normal for you (coffee, alcohol, dessert, TV, internet, criticism, marital sex, anything!).



TYPES OF FASTS

6. **Private.** Secretly fasting so as not to be noticed by others.
7. **Congregational.** When all or part of the local church fasts in solidarity for the same purpose.
8. **National.** When leaders call their entire nation to fast in unity for a particular purpose.
9. **Occasional.** Fasting for special occasions as the need arises.

* For Christians, the **most common types** of fasts are normal, private, and occasional

Source: Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*



HOW TO PRACTICE FASTING

How to begin disciplining yourself to a **normal** fast?

- Plan and practice a regular **once-a-week** fast
- **Regularly skip** one or two **meals** (no sneaking snacks!)
- Plenty of **fluid intake** (water, juice, electrolyte supplements)
- Keep your fast **brief** and **supervised** (by your doctor if necessary)
- **Link** your fast **with another discipline** (e.g., prayer, study, solitude, service & giving)
- Unless the fast is corporate, **keep it private** (except for a supervisor) and don't draw attention to yourself
- For health reasons, the **longer the fast**, the slower you should return to your regular diet

Source: Authentic Discipleship, Intro to Spiritual Disciplines



COMMITTING TO FAST

1. Will you confess and repent of any **fear of fasting**?
2. Will you fast as the **Holy Spirit directs**?
3. Will you plan a **fast of dedication** now as an expression of your willingness to fast from now on?



BEST BOOKS:
SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES

RESOURCES FOR PURSUING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (GENERAL)

- [Authentic Discipleship](#) (see Spiritual Formation resources)
- Adele Calhoun. [*Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*](#)
- Nathan Foster. [*The Making of an Ordinary Saint*](#)
- Richard Foster. [*Celebration of Discipline*](#)
- Richard Lovelace. [*Renewal as a Way of Life*](#)
- Richard Lovelace. [*Dynamics of Spiritual Life*](#)
- Peter Scazzero. [*Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*](#)
- R.C. Sproul. [*Five Things Every Christian Needs to Grow*](#)
- Donald Whitney. [*Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*](#)
- Dallas Willard. [*The Spirit of the Disciplines*](#)



**BEST BOOKS:
SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES**

RESOURCES FOR PURSUING “INWARD” SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- Prayer
 - Timothy Keller. *Prayer*
 - Paul Miller. *A Praying Life*
 - Philip Reinders. *Seeking God’s Face*
- Meditation & Contemplation
 - Authentic Discipleship. *Meditation & Contemplation*
 - Thomas à Kempis. *The Imitation of Christ*



**BEST BOOKS:
SPIRITUAL
DISCIPLINES**

RESOURCES FOR PURSUING “INWARD” SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

- Study
 - Steve Levy. *Bible Overview*
 - Crossway. *ESV Study Bible*
- Journaling
 - Ron Klug. *How to Keep a Spiritual Journal*
 - Luann Budd. *Journal Keeping*
 - Jim Belcher. *In Search of Deep Faith*
- Fasting
 - Bill Bright. *Seven Basic Steps to Successful Prayer & Fasting*
 - Arthur Wallis. *God's Chosen Fast*
 - John Piper. *A Hunger for God*