

“Spiritual Disciplines - An Overview”
A position paper of the Elder Council
Quail Lakes Baptist Church
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We discipline ourselves in order to achieve a wide variety of tasks or functions. We engage in discipline when we study in order to excel in an academic or professional field; the athlete must be disciplined in order to achieve on the field or run a marathon. Why would we be surprised to learn that discipline is part of the life of the disciple of Jesus Christ? Paul says,

Rom 6:13-14

13 “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. 14 For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

The goal of the spiritual disciplines is to obey this call to engage the whole person in a life that is growing in devotion to Jesus.

These thoughts taken from the Introduction to Chuck Swindoll’s recent book on the Spiritual Disciplines entitled So You Want to be Like Christ? :

“Many centuries ago, Paul coached Timothy, his son in the ministry with the words *“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness”* (1 Timothy 4:7)...

Paul wanted his son in the ministry to be a good servant of Jesus Christ as he coached others in the same way he had been coached... Paul chose carefully when he selected the Greek term *gumnazo* (most English transliterations spell in *gymazo*, from which we get our word *gymnasium*.) ...

So, you want to be like Christ? Me too. But that kind of godliness won’t just happen by hanging around a church...It will take more- much more. Disciplining ourselves will require the same kind of focused thinking and living that our Master modeled during his brief life on earth.

Everything starts in the gymnasium of the soul...”

The spiritual disciplines have traditionally been divided into two categories: Abstinence and Engagement. Abstinence involves something that we give up, something that is perfectly normal but by putting it aside we can focus more on our walk with God.

Engagement disciplines are those things that we make time to do in order to grow in Christ. The disciplines remind us that walking with Jesus is not just knowing things about Him; it is living as Jesus lived and wants us to live.

The practice of spiritual disciplines requires that we ask these two questions:

“What am I currently not doing that, if I were doing, would open myself up more to God’s work of grace in my life?”

“What am I currently doing that, if eliminated, would open myself up more to God's work of grace in my life?”

It is important to remember, however, that the disciplines, in and of themselves, do not grow us and do not change us. These are not mystical practices that have power in themselves, rather, they are simply opportunities to be open to God's work in us as the Holy Spirit works to grow us to be more like Christ.

Disciplines of Abstinence

Solitude: The practice of spending time purposefully abstaining from interaction with other people so that we can concentrate on God and talk to Him in prayer. (Gen. 32:24, Matt. 14:23, Mark 1:35, Mark 6:31, Luke 4:42, Luke 5:16, Luke 6:12)

Silence: The practice of closing off the sounds of the world for a period of time in order to have quiet so that our hearts may be attentive to God. (Psalm 4:4, Psalm 131:2, Isa. 30:15, Isa. 32:17, Lam. 3:26, Hab. 2:20, Rev. 8:1 - Heavenly scene shows silence as reverence and awe.)

Fasting: The practice of voluntarily abstaining from an otherwise normal function. Most often eating – for the sake of intense spiritual activity, i.e. prayer. (Psalm 69:10, Neh. 1:4, Matt. 4:2, Matt. 6:16-18)

Frugality: The practice of a lifestyle of modesty, and lack of pretension, that disciplines the temptation to use material blessing only for status and luxury that dulls our focus upon God. (Eccl. 5:10, Matt. 6:24, Phil. 4:11-13, Heb. 12:1-3, Rev. 3:17)

Chastity: The practice of purposefully turning away from the sexual dimension of life, even between husband and wife, for a time. Thus learning not to be governed by this dimension of life. (1 Cor. 7:8, 1 Tim. 5:2, 2Tim. 2:22)

Secrecy: The practice of consciously refraining from having our good deeds and good qualities generally known in order to avoid doing them for the wrong motivations. (Matt. 6:4, Matt. 6:18)

Sacrifice: The practice of deliberately forsaking the security of satisfying our own needs and wants with our resources and trusting God to sustain and provide. (2 Sam. 24:24, Psalm 4:5, Mark 14:3, Rom. 12:1, 2 Cor. 8:2, Heb.13:16)

Disciplines of Engagement

Study: The practice of engaging the mind with the Bible, and the use of helpful Christian books and materials to assist us in our understanding of and obedience to God's Word. (Ezra 7:10, Psalm 119:97, Psalm 111:2, 2 Tim. 2:15)

Worship: The practice of engaging in corporate and private times of expressing the

worth and glory of God. (Exude. 23:25, Neh. 8:6, Psalm 96:9, Psalm 99:5, Isa. 66:23, Matt. 4:10, John 4:21-24, Acts 13:1-3, Heb. 12:28, Rev. 7:15)

Celebration: The practice of expressing our delight and joy as a result of our faith in Christ, both in our own relationship with Christ and with other believers. (2 Sam. 6:14, Psalm 126:2, 1 Cor. 5:8, Phil. 4:4)

Service: The practice of being involved in actively working for the good of others and the cause of God and the Gospel. (Num. 8:11, Josh. 24:15, 1 Sam. 12:24, Prov. 31:15, Mal. 3:17-18, Matt. 20:26, Matt. 23:11, Luke 22:27, John 12:26, 2 Cor. 6:4, Col. 1:23, Heb. 6:10)

Prayer: The practice of regular conversations with God [Two way communication not necessarily involving an audible voice from God]. (Gen 25:21, 1 Sam 12:23, 2 Chron. 7:14, Psalm 32:6, Prov. 15:29, Isa. 56:7, Jer. 29:7, Matt. 5:44, Matt. 6:5-6, Luke 11:2-4, Luke 18:1, Acts 1:14, Acts 6:6, Rom. 12:12, Eph. 6:18, 1 Thess. 5:17, 1 Peter 3:12)

Fellowship: The practice of engaging with other disciples of Christ in the common activities of worship, study, prayer, celebration and service. (Psalm 133:1, Matt. 18:20, Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:25)

Confession: The practice of confessing your weaknesses and failures to God for his forgiveness and to trusted people who will pray with us and be spiritual allies. (Psalm 32:5, Psalm 38:18, James 5:16, 1 John 1:9)

Submission: The practice of subordinating oneself to the proper people in the proper ways. This submission stems from the call to mutual submission one to another out of reverence for Christ and extends to voluntary submission to those in authority over us. (Prov. 1:8, Prov. 6:20, Eph. 5:21, Heb. 13:17)

Meditation: The practice of prayerfully pondering God, His word, and His work in His world. (Josh. 1:8, Psalm 1:2, Psalm 19:14, Psalm 77:12, Psalm 119:15, 23, 27, 97, 99, 148, Psalm 145:5, Phil. 4:8, Col. 3:2)

The Elder Council of Quail Lakes Baptist Church sees these as appropriate discipleship practices when engaged in as described above.