

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES (SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES): DOORS TO LIBERATION

1.0 BACKGROUND

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IS KEY ENVIRONMENT IN THE DISCIPLINES

1.1 BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Classical SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES challenge us to go below the surface to go deeply into the inner caverns of the spiritual realm. Keynote to all SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES is liberation which brings joy.

Singing, dancing and shouting characterize the disciplines of the spiritual life.

Psalms 42:7- **“Deep calls unto deep.....”**

Deep within (inner depths or parts) you may have known a call to more commitment and rest of the word.

- People may dabble with journey into the inner depths for a while but then they quickly get back into that routine of life.
- More practical problem may be cited: the lack of an Instructions Manual about how to explore the inward life. This is not so: it was so routinely common to all. That is why the Bible gives no instructions on them apart from a few cautions and attitudinal dispositions of the heart.
- In- grained habits of sin lead to slavery (Bondage). Outward form of controlling sin cannot achieve any lasting inner transformation which comes by grace: (Col 2:20-23 KJV) ‘Touch not, taste not, handle not...’

‘will worship’= Idolatry. See Prov. 14:14 and Isa 53:6

We act or speak out of the abundance of our inner depths. Externalities, which was key to the Pharisees and Scribes, cannot bring about the transformation of the inner spirit. This can take place only by grace, not works or human effort.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES OPEN THE DOOR

Human means of will and determination cannot achieve transformation.

Inner Righteousness is a gift of God given by grace only (Rom 5:17) But we should avoid the error of thinking we have nothing to do to attain the Righteousness by grace. God has given us the SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES to impart grace to us to transform us so He can bless us.

TURNING THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES INTO LAWS IS THE WAY OF DEATH

The SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES should not become another set of soul-killing laws.

Matthew 5:20

The righteousness of the Pharisees was externalism.

Legalism=Witchcraft: 1. Control 2. Manipulation 3. Intimidation

2.0 CATEGORIES OF THE DISCIPLINES

INWARD DISCIPLINES	OUTWARD DISCIPLINES	CORPORATE DISCIPLINES
Meditation	Simplicity	Confession (Jas 5:16)
Prayer	Solitude	Worship*
Fasting	Submission	Guidance
Study	Service	Celebration

1 Peter 2:9 :Universal Priesthood(Revelation at time of Reformation)

2.1 DISCIPLINE OF MEDITATION

There is the tendency for many people in the present world to confuse Biblical Meditation(BM) with Transcendental Meditation(TM) of Eastern Religions. TM uses a Mantra for the attainment of Nirvana, a sort of Heaven on Earth experience. In TM one focuses on emptiness while in BM one focuses on the word of Jesus.

Definition Of Meditation

To fix my mind on the written word, to roll the word around in my mind and to look at it from every angle. To imagine myself in that word and talk and mutter it to myself.

Meditation Is In The Heart And By The Mouth God's Word Is Worked Into Our Hearts (Spirits)

Just as unrighteousness is confessed out of our hearts by the mouth, righteousness is confessed into our hearts BY THE MOUTH (Psalm 19:14, Psalm 39, Psalm 49:3)

Benefits Of Meditation

Enables us to gain wisdom to deal wisely in all affairs that in order to make our way prosperous and to have every good success (Josh. 1:8, Psalm 119:97-99, Proverbs 2:6-17, Prov. 4:7-8, Isaiah 55:11)

Some examples are:

- I) Healing (Prov. 4:20-23, Prov. 3:7-8, Prov. 9:10)
- ii) Favour with men and God (Prov. 3:3-4)
- iii) Renewal of mind and spirit of the mind to produce change for progress (Prov. 6:23, Rom. 12:2, Matt. 13:8, Eph 4)

iv) Knowledge for Revelation for success (Prov. 29:18, Hosea 4:6)

v) Gives power (Eph. 6:18)

vi) Separates Soul and Spirit (Heb. 4:12, Heb. 12:

2.2 DISCIPLINE OF PRAYER

Part 1

Training yourself up in the lifestyle of prayer

You are a Spirit, you live in a Body and you have a Soul.

The Soul is made up of your mind, will and emotions. The mind is where the battle is fought for the control of your actions. The mind has two components:

1. The Judge mind or conscious thought. This rationalises, decides, figures out.
2. The Robot mind or unconscious thought. This gets you to do things you have trained yourself to do.

Christians must learn to renew their Robot mind to act in the will of God, instead of merely listening with their Judge mind and mentally assenting to the Word preached.

Renewing and training the Robot mind comes through meditation and doing the Word of God. We need to renew our Robot-minds to pray always, to like praying and to pray effectively. Just believing in these things with out Judge mind will not get us very far spiritually.

Part 2

Paul the Apostle had as much trouble with his Robot mind as we do - Rom. 7:15-25. However, through Christ we are able to do the will of God, just as Paul was - Phil., 2:13; Matt. 26:41; Is. 1:19.

The “Always”

Always means: at all time, on all occasions, repeatedly. The bible seems contradictory in requiring us to “always” do certain things -

e.g. Meditate always - Josh. 1:18
Rejoice always - Phil. 4:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Cor. 6:10
Give thanks always - 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Cor. 1:4; Eph. 5:20
Wait always - Ps. 25:5; Hos. 12:6
(Wait means “to twist together like a rope”)
and most of all, - Luke 18:1; Luke 21:36; Eph. 6:18;
pray always Col. 1:3; Philemon 4.

How can we do all of these things always, all the time, together? We can, by understanding why God wants us to do them. He wants communion with His man. All these actions are types of communion with God. Praying is just one part of our communion with God., It is a very important part, but still belongs in the whole of communion with our creator.

Ask

Two main Greek words are translated “ask” in the New Testament:

1. Erotao - to ask where the petitioner is on an equal footing or familiar with the benefactor. To enquire, request as a favour - e.g. Matt. 16:13; John 16:19; Acts 23:19
John 16:23.
2. Aiteo - to ask usually from an attitude of a supplicant - from one in a lesser position than the benefactor. But it is to ask, demanding something due - e.g. Matt. 6:8; Matt. 7:7; John 14:13; James 1:5; 1 John 5:14:15.

When Jesus tells us to “aiteo” God, we are able to do so because of our covenant with God through the blood of Jesus. Aiteo is a covenant asking.

Part 3

The do’s and don’ts of prayer

DO

Pray - Luke 18:1

Pray in faith - James 1:5-6;
James 1:7-8
Heb. 11:6; Rom. 14:23

Pray wholeheartedly - Jer. 29:23;
3:15-16
James 5:16-17; James 4:8

Pray and live obediently -
1 John 3:22; 1 John 1:7;
James 4:7

Pray according to His will -
1 John 5:14-15

DON’T

Omit to pray - Matt. 26:41

Pray being in double-minded -

Pray being lukewarm - Rev.

Live in sin - Is. 59:1; Micah 3:4;
Ps. 66:18; Deut. 1:43-45;
Prov. 1:24-28

Pray to satisfy your own lusts -
James 4:3

Part 4

DO

Pray in love - 1 Cor. 13:2;
Gal. 5:6
Have patience - Heb. 6:12
Heb. 10:36
Listen – 1 Sam 3:9, Eccl 5:1-2

DON’T

Lack mercy - Prov. 21:13

2.3 DISCIPLINE OF FASTING

Define Prayer: Communicating with God

Intercession: Standing in the gap for others

What is Fasting: Denying yourself food / water and fleshly pleasures to different degrees: Requires separation to pray and war.

Our Enemies: Flesh—Rev. 3:1.

World—Love of world is enmity to God (1 John 2; James 4)

Devil—Mark 9:29; Prov. 24:6

Fasting includes mourning, solemnness (Joel 2:12-13; Dan. 10:2-3)

The combination of intense material / physical desires with the spiritual desire to communicate with one's spiritual source leads to a much greater intensity (Matt. 11:12; Heb. 10:35-36).

Three Kingdom Practices For Seeking God Diligently (Matt. 6)

- i. Giving (Matt. 6:2-3)
- ii. Praying (Matt. 6:5-7)
- iii. Fasting (Matt. 6:16-18)

Note—When you fast:

Principles for Fasting (Isa. 58:6-14)

Types Of Fasting

	<u>Examp</u>
a. Abstinance from food (Luke 4:2)	<u>es</u> (OLD TESTAMENT) Esther 4:16
b. Abstinance from food and water (Esther 4:16)	Joel 2:12-18
c. Abstinance from food and sex (1 Cor. 7:5)	Nehemi ah 1:4

(NEW
TESTAMENT)

- d. Abstinance from fruits and delectable foods (Dan. 10:2-3) Acts 9:4, 13
Acts 14:21-23
2 Cor. 6:3

Ten Reasons For Fasting

1. Ministering to the Lord (Acts 13)
2. Increasing faith (Matt. 17:19-21; Jude 20)
3. To give self to prayer (sanctified) (1 Cor. 7:5)
4. To concentrate on walking in spirit (Rom. 8, Galatians; Col. 3:5)
5. Provides the opportunity to meditate in the word which puts the revealed word in your heart (Ps. 51:6) for which God gives you wisdom for victory (Prov. 24:6). Heart faith = wisdom (Mark 11:23-24)
6. To provide faith guidelines for deliverance (Mark 17:21)
7. To obtain faith to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Jude 20) - for the release of anointing for effective Christians service (Rom. 12:6)
8. To release power to overcome principalities against nation, etc (Dan. 10; Neh. 10)
9. For developing gifts of Holy Spirit by being available to allow the Holy Spirit to manifest Himself (1 Cor. 14:4; 2 Tim. 1:6)
10. Establishing Christians in the faith (Acts 14:21-23; Joel 2:28-32; Rom. 1:11-12; Obadiah 1:17)

Advice

1. Some who cannot do it from 6am - 6pm, can do 6am – 12 pm or use fruits or vegetables
2. Regular prayers must be organised.
3. The word of God must be taught for about 15 minutes during each prayer service.

2.4 DISCIPLINE OF STUDY

The study of the Bible is for the purpose of rightly divide the word of truth(2 Tim 2:15) and to go beyond a superficial understanding of the word of God in order to fully apply it to our lives. Meditation forms part of the Study as we seek illumination from the Lord Holy Spirit by prayer.

Study will be taught separately using previously supplied materials and additional ones that can be accessed separately.

2.5 DISCIPLINE OF SIMPLICITY

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The Christian concept of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle.

When we are truly in this interior simplicity our whole appearance is franker, more natural. This true simplicity makes us conscious of a certain openness, gentleness, innocence, charm when we see it near to and continually with pure eyes.

- *“O how amiable this simplicity is! Who will give it to me? I leave all for this. It is the pearl of the Gospel.”* **Francois Fenelon**

Simplicity is freedom. Duplicity is bondage. Simplicity brings joy and balance. Duplicity brings anxiety and fear. The preacher of Ecclesiastes observed that "God made man simple; man's complex problems are of his own devising" (Eccles. 7:39, Jerusalem Bible). Because many of us are experiencing the liberation God brings through simplicity we are once again singing an old Shaker hymn:

It's a gift to be simple, It's a gift to be free, It's a gift to come down where we ought to be, And when we see ourselves in a way that's right, We will live in a valley of love and delight!

When true simplicity is gained, To live and to love we will not be ashamed. To turn and to turn will be our delight till by turning we turn 'round right.

The Christian Discipline of Simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward life-style. Both the inward and outward aspects of simplicity are essential. We deceive ourselves if we believe we can possess the inward reality without its having a profound effect on how we live. When we are truly in this interior simplicity our whole appearance is franker, more natural.

To attempt to arrange an outward life-style of simplicity without the inward reality leads to deadly legalism.

Simplicity begins in inward focus and unity. It means to live out of what Thomas Kelly called "The Divine Center". Kierkegaard captured the nucleus of Christian simplicity in the profound title of his book: "Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing".

Experiencing the inward reality liberates us outwardly. Speech becomes truthful and honest. The lust of status and position is gone because we no longer need status and position. We cease from showy extravagance, not on the grounds of being unable to afford it, but on the grounds of principle. Our goods become available to others. We join the experience that Richard E. Byrd recorded in his journal after months alone in the barren Arctic: "I am learning that a man can live profoundly without masses of things".

Contemporary culture lacks both the inward reality and the outward life-style of simplicity. Inwardly modern man is fractured and fragmented. He is trapped in a maze of competing attachments. One moment he makes decisions on the basis of sound reason and the next moment out of fear of what others will think of him. He has no unity or focus around which life is oriented.

Because we lack a divine Center our need for security has led us into an insane attachment to things. We must clearly understand that 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".

Where planned obsolescence leaves off, psychological obsolescence takes over. We are made to feel ashamed to wear clothes or drive cars until they are worn out. The mass media have convinced us that is to be out of step with reality. It is time we awaken to the fact that conformity to a sick society is to be sick. Until we see how unbalanced our culture has become at this point we will not be able to deal with the mammon spirit within ourselves nor will we desire Christian simplicity.

The psychosis permeates even our mythology. The modern hero is the poor boy who becomes rich rather than the Franciscan or Buddhist ideal of the rich boy who voluntarily becomes poor. (We still find it difficult to attain it).

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2.6 DISCIPLINE OF SOLITUDE

Jesus calls us from loneliness to solitude.

Major Problem: Fear of being left alone

Mark 1:35 , Mark 6:31, Matthew 26:36-46

2.7 DISCIPLINE OF SUBMISSION

A Christian man is the most free Lord of all and subject to none. A Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all and subject to none (Martin Luther)

The discipline of submission has been the most abused. Freedom in Submission-is the ability to lay down the terrible burdens of always needing to get our own way.

There is the need to value other people. The key is the spirit of submission. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:18 about being submissive because it is possible to obey a master without the spirit of submission.

Check out 'Ministerial Notes' on *leitergous* etc

Isaac and Meditation Gen 24:63

2.8 DISCIPLINE OF SERVICE

Bernard Clairvaux:

'Learn the lesson that, if you are to do the work of a prophet, what you need is not a sceptre but a hoe'

Luke 9:46, John 13:14-15, Matt 20:25-28

Self-Righteousness	VS	True Service
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires external rewards• Concerned about results• Picks and chooses when to serve.• Affected by moods and		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serves all (Mk 9:35)• Ministers faithfully in response to a need. Lets the service discipline the feelings.

whims only when there is a “feeling to serve” (“moved by the Spirit”) • Fractures community	• A lifestyle-Acts from in-built motivation of love to serve. • Builds community
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Service works grace and humility into our lives. More than the transformation within us we are aware of a deeper love and joy in God. Joyous hidden service to others is acted prayer of thanksgiving.

Rather than to succumb to the natural hesitancy of “yes...but”, we should choose to be a servant rather than choosing to serve after “considering the costs”.

In all we give up the right to be in charge.

If we voluntarily choose to be taken advantage of we cannot be manipulated.

Serving includes guarding the reputation of others eg”..speak no evil of no one ” (Titus 3:2)

Hospitality (1Peter 4:9, Rom 12:13, 1Tim 3:2, Tit 1:8)

Bearing with one another to fulfil the love of Christ, the Royal Law (Gal 6:2, Jas 2:8)

Revolutionary subordination taught by Jesus

“Do not be called “Rabbi, or Master” (Matt 23:8-11)

Cross-bearing (Mark 8:34, Mark 9:35-the first may be the last of all)

As taught by the Epistles

Phil 2:4-7, 1 Peter 2:21-23, Eph 5:21, Phil 2:3, Col 3:18-22.

2.9 DISCIPLINE OF CONFESSION

*“The confession of evil works is the first beginning of good works”-
Augustine Hippo*

It was love not anger, that brought Jesus to the cross. Hence, His refusal to drink the pain killer of “vinegar”.

Jesus' moment of weakness was his moment of greatest triumph. (Mark 15:34, 2 Corinth 5:21)

Jas 5:16-Confession of sins to one another and praying for one another together.

Authority to forgive delegated to followers of Jesus-John 20:23

-Universal Priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:4)- To help one another to make God's presence and forgiveness real to us. There is Counsel in confession-Confidentiality can be maintained when we are in the Spirit.

Individual confession

Corporate confession

2.11 DISCIPLINE OF WORSHIP

Definition

According to William Temple,

Worship is

1. To quicken the conscience by the holiness of God.
2. To feed the mind with the truth of God.
3. To purge the imagination by the beauty of God.
4. To open the heart to the love of God.
5. To devote the will to the purpose of God.

Object of worship

Mark 4:10, Exodus 20:3

A.W. Tozer :”..The essence of idolatry is the entertainment of thoughts about God that are unworthy of him.”

Priority of worship-Mark 12:30, Ezel 44:15

Preparation for worship-Prepare in “Holy expectancy” Acts 2:2,4:3-
Life entering the Holy of Holies.

Holy Expectancy begins as we enter the Shekinah of the heart. While going through our daily chores we are filled with inward worship and adoration,;while we are listening to our television ,as we work, play eat and sleep.

Reflect on worship leader or Pastor, identify congregation members that need your intercession etc.

Leader of worship-Jesus

He is alone and present in all his offices:High Priest, Prophets, Saviour, Redeemer, Shepherd, Bishop.

Avenue of worship

One important reason it is in SD is that worship is an coloured way of acting and living that sets us before God so he can transform us. As we respond to the liberating touch of the Holy Spirit we are divinely appointed avenues into the realm.

- i. To still all human activity-which must be a lifestyle not only as part of worship.
- ii. To still the activity of the flesh (creaturely) so the activity of the Holy Spirit dominates. Can take place in absolute silence. Better it is coming in reverential silence and awe before the Holy One of Eternity, not through skewered hearts and minds and tongues full of words.
- iii. Praise brings us into worship-sacrifices of praise continually- the fruit of our lips (Heb 13:15). Through praise, the emotions are to be brought into an act of worship.

Consequence of worship

If worship does not change us, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of Eternity is to change. Isa 6:8-worship enables us to lean the call.

Authentic worship will impel us to join in the Lamb's war against demonic powers everywhere, on the personal level, social level, institutional level etc.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is our commander in chief.

Willard Sparring: "Worship is a deliberate and disciplined adventure in reality" It is not for the timid or comfortable. It is opening ourselves to the dangerous life of the Spirit. It involves willingness to let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Col 3:16).

2.11 DISCIPLINE OF GUIDANCE

Introduction

God's guidance of Israel was seen by all-by pillar of cloud by day and a column of fire by night. It was corporate.

Jesus said we too can experience it (Matt 18:19-20)

See Acts 4:32, 33, Acts 13:1-3

Corporate guidance in Early Church

Acts 15:12, 28

Here, individual guidance impinged on corporate guidance

Important examples include:

- Guidance in Life Partner issues
- Divine guidance as a policy in CIC.

Spiritual Direction

In the Middle Ages no attempt at spiriual guidance was made without a Spiritual Director.

Many of the first Spiritual Directors were the descendants of the Fathers and were held in very high regard.

The purpose of the spiritual disciplines is to lead us . Our real direction-is from the Holy Spirit on behalf of Jesus through His word, inward teaching.

Dangers of Corporate Guidance(Even individual).

Manipulation or control and the domination of others' faith

2.12 DISCIPLINE OF CELEBRATION

introduction

It is the heart of the way of Christ. He entered the world on a high note of jubilation (Luke 2:10) and departed on a similar note-“These things I have spoken to you that my joy be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15:11)

-Celebration brings joy into life and joy makes us strong-the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh 8:10)

-Celebration is central to all Spiritual Disciplines.

Without a joyful spirit of festivity the Disciplines become dull, death-breathing tools in the hands of modern Pharisees. Without joyous celebration to infuse other Disciplines we will sooner or later abandon them.

Ancient Israel was commanded to gather together 3 times a year to celebrate the goodness of God. Hence, Feast of Tabernacles which is described as a Joyous Celebration (Exodus 23:16, Lev 23:40, 2 Chron 7:10)

3.0 SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF THE DISCIPLINES

Meditation heightens our spiritual sensitivity which, in turn, leads us to **Prayer** which involves **Fasting** as an accompanying means.

Informed by the above 3 Disciplines, we can effectively **Study** which gives us discernment about ourselves and the world we live in.

Through **Simplicity** we live with others in integrity. **Solitude** allows us to be genuinely present to people when we are with them.

Through **Submission** we live with others without manipulation and through **Service** we are a blessing to them.

Confession frees us from ourselves and releases us to Worship.

All the Disciplines ,freely exercised, bring forth the doxology of **Celebration**.

As Apostle Paul said, we should press forward in spite of difficulties and challenges(Phil. 3:14)