

Spiritual Disciplines

Dallas Willard, in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, and Richard Foster, in *Celebration of Discipline*, have compiled a list of spiritual disciplines and practices they believe were modeled in the life of Christ. These disciplines are typically organized into two categories: the disciplines of abstinence (or “letting go”) and the disciplines of activity.

Disciplines of Letting Go

These practices allow us to relinquish something in order to gain something new. We abstain from “busy-ness” in ministry, family life, and work. We stop talking for a while to hear from God. We give up buying another material possession to experience God more fully. First Peter 2:11 teaches us to “abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.” Identify what is keeping you from experiencing greater strength and perspective. Do you talk too much? Are possessions controlling you? Are you too worried about what others think? Choose disciplines that will help you become more dependent on God.

Solitude—Spending time alone to be with God. Find a quiet place to be alone with God for a period of time. Use the Bible as a source of companionship with God. Listen to Him. Remain alone and still.

Silence—Removing noisy distractions to hear from God. Find a quiet place away from noise to hear from God. Write your thoughts and impressions as God directs your heart. Silence can occur even in the midst of noise and distraction. But you must focus your attention on your soul. This could mean talking less or talking only when necessary. And it could mean turning off the radio and the TV.

Fasting—Skipping a meal(s) to find greater nourishment from God. Choose a period of time to go without food. Drink water and, if necessary, take vitamin supplements. Feel the pain of having an empty stomach and depend on God to fill you with His grace.

Frugality—Learning to live with less money and still meet your basic needs. Before buying something new, choose to go without or pick a less expensive alternative that will serve your basic needs. Live a simple, focused life.

Secrecy—Avoiding self-promotion, practice serving God without others knowing. Give in secret. Serve “behind the scenes” in a ministry that you are assured few will know about.

Sacrifice—Giving of our resources beyond what seems reasonable to remind us of our dependence on Christ. Choose to give your time or finances to the Lord beyond what you normally would.

Disciplines of Activity

Dallas Willard writes, “The disciplines of abstinence must be counter-balanced and supplemented by disciplines of engagement (activity).” It’s choosing to participate in activities that nurture our souls and strengthen us for the days ahead

Study—*Spending time reading the Scriptures and meditating on its meaning and importance to our lives.* We are nourished by the Word because it is our source of spiritual strength. Choose a time and a place to feed from the Word of God regularly.

Worship—*Offering praise and adoration to God.* His praise should continually be on our lips and in our thoughts. Read psalms, hymns, or spiritual songs, or sing to the Lord daily. Keep praise ever before you as you think of God’s mighty deeds in your life.

Prayer—*Talking to and listening to God about your relationship with Him and about the concerns of others.* Find time to pray to God without the distraction of people or things. Combine your prayer time with meditation on the Scriptures in order to focus on Christ.

Fellowship—*Mutual caring and ministry in the body of Christ.* Meet regularly with other Christians to find ways to minister to others. Encourage one another.

Confession—*Regularly confess your sins to the Lord and other trusted individuals.* As often as you are aware of sin in your life, confess it to the Lord and to those you may have offended.

Submission—*Humbling yourself before God and others while seeking accountability in relationships.* Find faithful brothers or sisters in Christ who can lovingly hold you accountable for your actions and growth in Christ.