

# The Spirit of the Disciplines

# **Dallas Willard**

"The soul and the body make a man; the spirit and discipline make a Christian." – John Wesley

"The spiritual life is a life of intersection with a personal God, and it is pure delusion to suppose that it can be carried on sloppily [i.e., in lieu of the necessary spiritual disciplines]."

- Dallas Willard

### Introduction

**Dallas Willard** (1935-2013).

- Professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California.
- A mentor in the field of Christian spiritual formation.
- A best-selling author.
- Willard's core message: Christian discipleship comes through God's grace and guidance, but also our determination and cooperation.
  - ► I Tim. 4:7 "Train yourself to be godly."
  - Serious followers of Christ pursue those disciplines and habits that lead to spiritual transformation.

#### The Book.

- Amazon description:
  - ► This wise and compelling meditation invites us to a new understanding that sees salvation not only in terms of forgiveness of sins but in light of the total transformation of our lives. Dallas Willard presents a way of living that enables ordinary men and women to join with God and realize their highest aspirations of well-being and doing. The key to this self-transformation resides in the practice of the spiritual disciplines....



| <br>  |   |       | <br> |  |
|---|---|-------|------|--|
|   |   |       |      |  |
|   |   |       |      |  |
|   |   |       |      |  |
|   |   |       |      |  |
|   |   |       |      |  |
| <br>• | • | ••••• | <br> |  |

"We can increasingly resemble Christ in character and in power by following him in his overall style of life," Willard affirms. "This was the method of his earliest disciples, and it is as valid today as it was then."

#### The Theme.

- How to live as Jesus lived in harmony with the life and will of God the Father.
  - ▶ Dallas Willard: "There is a way of spiritual transformation that is accessible to all people and the it really does work in the contemporary world.... [Simply following the example of Jesus] leads us through our lives into eternity.... We receive a power far beyond ourselves." [vi]
- Our society and culture are changing drastically, and modern life is increasingly complex, confusing and stressful.
  - ▶ We live in a society in which many people suffer from isolation, loneliness, personal emptiness and depression all of which contributes to a pathology of escapism either through mindless (and soul-less) junk entertainment, compulsive consumerism, drug and alcohol addiction, or other destructive tendencies.
- Contemporary church life usually does little to foster Christian spiritual maturity.
- The solution:
  - ► DW: "Christianity can only succeed as a guide for current humanity if it does two things: First, it must take the need for human transformation as seriously as do modern revolutionary movements.... Second, it needs to clarify and exemplify realistic methods of human transformation....

"My central claim is that we *can* become like Christ by doing one thing – by following him in the overall style of life he chose for himself. If we have faith in Christ, we must believe that he knew how to live. We can, through faith and grace, become like Christ by practicing the types of activities he engaged in... [so as] to remain constantly at home in the fellowship of his Father." [viii-ix]

# Willard's Personal Testimony.

- In the early 1970s Willard began systematically teaching the traditional Christian spiritual disciplines in his church.
  - ▶ DW: "Seventeen years of ministerial efforts in a wide range of denominational settings had made it clear to me that what Christians were normally told to do, the standard advice to churchgoers, was not advancing them spiritually."
  - ► Christian "discipleship" if it was emphasized at all consisted of regular church attendance, supporting the ministry of the church through their time and money, reading the Bible, doing good to others, and witnessing for their faith.
  - ▶ DW: "In the early 1970s, I began to teach the disciplines.... Over time, many of those whom he taught began to see the benefits of practicing the traditional methods of spiritual formation in terms of their own spiritual growth.

| "Our world has embarked on a suicidal journey." [1] |
|---|
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |

# 1: The Secret of the Easy Yoke

"Christianity has not so much been tried and found wanting, as it has been found difficult and left untried." — G. K. Chesterton

"It costs a man just as much to go to hell than to come to heaven."

— Soren Kierkegaard

# The Key to Christlikeness

# Imitating our Model.

- Think of a boy who is an aspiring baseball player....
- The same principles are true for everything in life for which we aspire.
  - ► DW: "We are touching upon a general principle of human life. It's true for the public speaker or the musicians, the teacher or the surgeon. A successful performance... rests largely and essentially upon the depths of a self wisely and rigorously prepared in the totality of its being mind and body. And what is true of specific activities is, of course, also true of life as a whole. As Plato long ago saw, there is an art of living...."

"Further, this is not a truth to be set aside when we come to our relationship with God. We are saved by grace, of course, and by it alone, and not because we [earn or] deserve it. That is the basis of God's acceptance of us. But grace does not mean that sufficient strength and insight will be automatically 'infused' into our being in the moment of need....

"Jesus understood this fact well and lived accordingly.... We forget that being the unique Son of God clearly did not relieve him of the necessity of a life of preparation.... After receiving the baptism at the hands of... John the Baptist, Jesus was in solitude and fasted for a month and a half. Afterward, as his ministry proceeded, he was alone much of the time, often spending the entire night in solitude and prayer...." [4-5]

- The central point: the secret lies in living like Jesus lived and adopting his overall life-style.
- Scott Peck, The Road Less Traveled:
  - ► "There are many people I know who possess a vision of [personal spiritual] evolution yet seem to lack the will for it. They want, and believe it is possible, to skip over the disciple, to find an easy shortcut to sainthood." [7]
- If we wish to follow Christ, we have to absorb not only "the mind of Christ" [Rom. 12:2] but the spiritual disciplines that he modeled throughout his earthly life.
  DW: "The secret... is to learn from Christ how to live our total lives, how to invest all

| our time and our e | • | • |      |
|--------------------|---|---|------|
|                    |   |   |      |
|                    |   |   |      |
|                    |   |   |      |
| <br>               |   |   | <br> |
| <br>               |   |   | <br> |
|                    |   |   |      |
|                    |   |   |      |

# 2. Making Theology Practical

"All men of the modern world exist in a continual and flagrant antagonism between their consciences and their way of life." — Leo Tolstoy, The Kingdom of God Is Within You

## A Spiritual Awakening.

- Everyone has a "theology" assumptions about the existence (or non-existence) of God, his nature and his character.
  - ► One's theology should set the standards for how one lives his/her life. [14]
- How can Jesus be our Lord if we have no real practical plan to follow in his footsteps?
- Modern evangelicalism emphasizes evangelism but has a deficient view of discipleship.
  - Evangelism is vital, but it is merely the gateway to spiritual life in Christ.
  - ► Evangelism misses the ultimate purpose of Christian faith: "For those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son" Rom. 8:29.
  - ► Discipleship is the ultimate purpose of the Great Commission Matt. 28:19-20.
  - ► Few churches offer any systematic lifestyle approach to developing mature disciples. [16]
- In recent years there has been a reawakening in some segments of Christianity to recover the traditional spiritual practices that can deepen our faith and commitment.
- As old religious and denominational affiliations and rivalries have lessened in recent decades, many Christians of various backgrounds are becoming more unified spiritually through recovering the traditional spiritual disciplines in Christian history.

### 3. Salvation Is a Life

"I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." — John 10:10

# Wholistic Discipleship.

 Many think of salvation as a moment that began our spiritual life instead of the daily life we receive from God. [28]

- Consider Jesus' lifestyle not only his teaching and healing, but his commitment to solitude, silence, prayer, fasting, service, etc.
  - ► DW: "It would seem only logical to emulate his daily actions since he was a great master of the spiritual life." [29]
  - ► In submitting to the will of God the Father, Jesus became not only the model but the very source of eternal salvation for all who obey God's will for mankind.

|      |      | ATIVITA |
|------|------|---------|
|      |      |         |
|      |      |         |
|      |      |         |
|      |      |         |
|      |      |         |
| <br> | <br> |         |
| <br> | <br> |         |

- Our body matter, and it is an integral part of a comprehensive understanding of wholistic Christian discipleship.
  - ▶ DW: "Certainly we cannot reasonably hope to [act like Christ] without adopting his form of life" and "without engaging in his disciplines."

"The fact that he was human just as we are ensures that we must likewise share [these same] disciplines with him....

"It is precisely this appropriate recognition of the body and of its implications for theology that is missing in current views of Christian salvation.... The human body is the focal point of human existence. [29-30]

- ► DW: "The surrender of myself to Christ is inseparable from the giving up of my body to him in such a way that it can serve both him and me as a common abode." [31]
  - I Cor. 6:15-20 "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself .... Flee from sexual immorality.... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you?... Therefore, honor God with your body."
- ▶ Biblical Christianity is not Docetism the belief that Jesus was a spiritual being who only *appeared* in human form.
  - DW: Like the Docetists, "we tend to think of the body and its functions as only a hindrance to our spiritual calling." [30]
  - Docetists had two opinions regarding the human body:
    - (1) The body is evil, and true spirituality calls for extreme (fanatical) asceticism.
    - (2) The body is unimportant, and it doesn't matter how we treat our body.
- ► When our understanding of the gospel fails to do justice to this basic truth that both our soul and our body are gifts from God then "Christianity inevitably becomes alienated from our actual existence." [31]

#### Wholistic Salvation.

- What does it mean to be "saved"?
- "Salvation" is more comprehensive than merely the forgiveness of sins.
  - ► DW: "One errant concept has done inestimable harm to the church and God's purpose for us is the concept that has restricted the Christian idea of salvation to mere foregiveness of sins...." [33]

If salvation is restricted exclusively to doctrinal theories of the atonement, "they are of no use in helping us... understand how, being reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we are then 'saved by his life' (Rom. 5:10). How can we be saved by his life when we believe salvation comes from his death alone?" [34]

DW: "The message of Jesus himself and of the early disciples was not just one of the

| forgiveness of sins, bur rather was one of newness of life The resurrection, not the death of Christ, was the central fact in the gospel" |
|---|
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |
|   |

- Our calling in Christ is to imitate his life. [34]
  - ▶ DW: "It wasn't Christ's death that [inspired the courage of the early church] but his life.... Christ's transcendent life... is what drew the disciples together around Jesus prior to his death. And then resurrection and postresurrection events proved that life to be indestructible." [35]
- The role of works.

### What About the Body?

- Spiritual disciplines engage the body just as they do the soul (our intellect, emotions and will).
- True salvation engages all aspects of our being.
  - ► DW: Most Christians view the body as a hindrance to spiritual growth everything from our craving for food and drink, sleep and comfort to sex and all forms of pleasure. "Our actual experience with the human body... may reinforce the idea that the most we can ever hope for is to reach a standoff with it, barely managing by the grace of God to keep it from spiritually defeating us until we are [finally] rid of it." [41]
  - ► The spiritual disciplines are so vital and necessary because they impact, condition and discipline our bodies as well as our minds for wholistic discipleship in keeping with God's ultimate intention for our lives. [42]

# 7. St. Paul's Psychology of Redemption: The Example

"In a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize.

Run in such a way as to get the prize.

Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training.

They do it to get a crown that will not last;

but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly;...

No, I discipline my body... so that after I have preached to others,

I myself will not be disqualified for the prize."

— I Cor. 9:24-27

# Wholistic Discipleship.

- The New Testament is not a manual on Christian spirituality.
- However, the lives of both Jesus and John the Baptist exemplify the spiritual disciplines that strengthen one's soul.

| DW: "Wherever early Christians looked they saw examples of solitude, fasting, prayer, worship, and sacrificial service and giving These early Christians arranged their lives very differently from their non-Christian neighbors, as well as from the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians themselves Christians today." [100] |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

- EX: The discipline of solitude (Mark 1:35; 6:31, 46).
  - ► DW: "It is solitude... that opens the possibility of a radical relationship to God" that can help us endure and triumph over the greatest challenges in life.
- Solitude and silence are conducive to receiving inspiration, direction and motivation for the tasks and challenges we face.
  - ► "All great works are prepared in the desert.... Prophets, apostles, preachers, martyrs, [great thinkers], inspired artists and ordinary men and women all pay tribute to [solitude]... and silence." [A.G. Sertillanges, quote in *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 101.]

# 8. History and the Meaning of the Disciplines

"Asceticism is a valid part of religion or of any other important enterprise."
— Elton Trueblood

# Radical Discipleship.

- Most Americans believe that everyone has the right to live their lives as they please.
  - ► The "good life" is all about self-fulfillment the lifelong pursuit of material, social and career success.
  - ► Jesus' teaching that "whoever would save his life must lose it" (Mark 8:35-36) seems nonsensical.
- Secularists regard those who pursue spiritual discipline and maturity as ridiculous fanatics.

### The Monastic Legacy.

- Dallas Willard: Nothing discredited the practice of biblically-based spiritual disciplines more than the excesses of monasticism.
  - ▶ DW: "Nothing in the history of the Western world has done more harm to the present-day prospects of a sensible and necessary asceticism than the emergence of monasticism as a form of Christian life.... Much of the motivation that gave rise to monasticism was praiseworthy, many great Christians served within the monastic order, and many good things were accomplished by these great men [such as the preservation and translation of Biblical texts through the centuries along with other great literary works of antiquity].

"It is equally true, however, that within those orders spiritual discipline came over the years to be identified with confused and destructive excesses. These excesses were supported [by] attitudes of bodily hatred and the belief that forgiveness [of sins] and merit can be gained by [acts of extreme asceticism and self-mortification]." [139]

► Note: Although he lived a disciplined (and moderately ascetic) life, Jesus never abused his body – nor should any follower of Jesus!

Nor did Jesus and his disciples flee the world and isolate themselves for prolonged

periods of time: they were "in the world but not of the world" – John 17:14.

- The legacy of Origen of Alexandria, Egypt (c. 185-254).
  - ► A Bible commentator, a biblical textual critic, and a systematic theologian.
  - ► A committed ascetic.
  - ► A Christian mystic.
  - "Spiritual perfectionism" and "union with God".
    - "Origen saw man as cooperating in the process of his own sanctification, the outcome of union with God" via "an unremitting practice of asceticism." [140]
- Constantine (r. 312-37) and the imperial patronage of Christianity.
- Theodosius I (r. 379-95) and the establishment of Christianity as the official state religion.
  - ► A nominal form of Christianity that was susceptible to corruption theologically, ecclesiastically, and morally.
- The hermitage and monastic movements.
  - ► The corruption of institutional Christianity, the disintegration of the Western Roman Empire, and the flight from "the world".
  - ► The hermit and monastic lifestyles were spiritual renewal movements but also spiritual protest movements.
- Monastic contributions to Western civilization.
  - ► Monks preserved, copied and transmitted ancient Biblical manuscripts and other great literary texts in *scriptoriums*.
  - Monasteries often served as spiritual centers for those in the surrounding area.
- Monastic abuses.

# Martin Luther and the Protestant Legacy.



- The central message of the Protestant Reformation: salvation by grace alone (*sola gratia*) through faith alone (*sola fide*).
- A pervasive heresy in Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox theology.
- Martin Luther's (1483-1546) monastic career.
- Luther's "Tower Experience" (1519?).
  - A spiritual epiphany.
    - Romans 1:17: "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith" (Hab. 2:4).
    - "At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith.... Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and that the gates of heaven had been opened. The whole of scripture gained a new meaning."

| <br> | <br> |
|------|------|
| <br> | <br> |
| <br> | <br> |
|      |      |
|      |      |
|      |      |

- Spiritual disciplines, justification and sanctification.
  - ► Luther's realization: spiritual disciplines do not merit justification.
  - ► However: spiritual disciples *do* facilitate sanctification and discipleship.
  - ► DW: "Here is where the Protestant reaction against asceticism comes in: it was a reaction against any essential role of spiritual disciplines in the process of redemption."
- Because he never found justification through asceticism, Luther rejected the traditional spiritual disciplines along with Catholic doctrines and practices that were clearly unbiblical.
  - ► DW: The result is that the biblical passages that exemplify or endorse ascetic practices were ignored. [134]
  - ▶ DW: "This [Catholic] obsession with merit and forgiveness of sins... would not permit the monastic system of Christianity to develop a pattern of spiritual disciplines that was biblically as well as psychologically and spiritually sound."

However... although Protestantism precluded 'works' and Catholicism's ecclesiastical sacraments as essential for salvation, it lacked any adequate account of what human beings *do* to become, by the grace of God, the kind of people Jesus calls them to be....

"Luther and his followers thought that the teaching and preaching of the gospel, along with the administration of the sacraments, was all that was really essential for the formation of the spiritual life." [145-47]

#### A New Look at Asceticism.

- Asceticism (Greek: *asko*) is simply the integration of practices into our spiritual life that facilitate our spiritual growth.
  - ► Asko simply means to practice, train for, study for, or work for something. (Acts 24:16)
  - Asceticism is simply devotion to a lifestyle characterized by simplicity, austerity, and self-discipline for the purpose of spiritual growth and becoming more Christlike.
- DW: The essence of Christian asceticism is the voluntary practice of healthy spiritual habits for the deliverance and protection of one's soul. [150]
  - ► Biblical spiritual disciplines engage the body, mind and soul.
  - ► I Pet. 1:13: "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self controlled.... As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.... Be holy in all you do"
- Jesus was an ascetic he practiced chastity and periodically set aside special times for solitude, prayer and fasting.

#### The Summa.

| <ul> <li>Spiritual disciplines are practical practices to accomplish our ultimate objective – t think, talk and act more Christlike so as to prepare our soul to live in God's present</li> </ul> | ce. |
|---|-----|
|   |     |
|   |     |
|   |     |
|   |     |
|   |     |
|   |     |
|   |     |
|   |     |

# 9. Some Main Disciplines for the Spiritual Life

"Continue to work out your salvation with awe and reverence, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

- Phil. 2:12

"Add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, kindness; and to kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive...."

— II Peter 5:8

# **Disciplines of Abstinence**

## Solitude (and Silence).

- Dallas Willard: "Of all the disciplines of abstinence, solitude is generally the most fundamental in the beginning of the spiritual life." [161]
- In solitude we temporarily abstain from involvement with others for a particular purpose.
- Solitude is inextricably linked to the discipline of silence.
  - ▶ James 1:19 "Everyone should be quick to listen [but] slow to speak." [164]

### Fasting.

- Fasting teaches temperance and self-control in regard to all of our fundamental drives.
  - ▶ DW: "Fasting is one of the more important ways of practicing that self-denial required of everyone who would follow Christ" Matt. 16:24.
- Fasting reveals how powerful our desire is for food, busyness, and external stimulation.
- In preparation for his ministry, Jesus went 40 days without food Matt. 4.
- Thomas à Kempis in *The Imitation of Christ* (1420): "Refrain from gluttony and thou shall the more easily restrain all the [other] inclinations of the flesh." [167]
- Fasting is an inclusive discipline relates to all other areas of life.

#### Frugality.

- Materialism mindless and frivolous buying and consumption of unnecessary things distracts from the things that matter and corrupts the soul. [169]
- Certain habits clutter our lives and deter us from pursuing what really matters in life.
- Frugality is a key to refraining from over-indulgence.

| DW: Frugality controls our urge to use money or things in ways that are wasteful, extravagant and luxurious. Practicing frugality means that we stay within the bounds of what is sensible, wise, prudent and practical. [168] |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

### Chastity.

- Chastity focuses on one of our most habitual and potentially destructive passions and obsessions: sex.
- We are by nature sexual beings, and when properly controlled and channeled, sex can be a beautiful and fulfilling expression of love toward one's spouse.
- Satan provides corrupt counterfeits for everything that is wholesome in life, including true religion, human sexuality, social/cultural values and institutions, etc.
- C. S. Lewis: "Chastity is the most unpopular of Christian virtues." [Mere Christianity, p. 95]
- Even after his conversion, Augustine continued to wrestle with his sexual impulses: "O Lord, make me chaste... but not yet!"

[NOTE: Chastity is neither physically nor mentally unhealthy. No one has ever died from an overdose of chastity.]

- The Bible is unequivocal on sexual morality:
  - ► CSL: "There is no getting away from it; the Christian rule is, 'Either marriage, with complete faithfulness to your partner, or else abstinence....

"Christian sexual morality is so contrary to our instincts that either Christianity is wrong or our sexual instincts have been perverted." [Ibid.]

- Sexual propaganda is absolutely pervasive.
  - ► Irresponsible sexual behavior is no longer just permitted it is celebrated and promoted.
- The "Sexual Revolution" and sexual chaos began long before the 1960s (or the 1920s).
- The wages of the Sexual Revolution:
  - A thoroughly pornified society and culture.
  - ► Astronomical abortion rate.
  - ► Astronomical illegitimate birth rate.
- I Cor. 6:18 Immoral sexual behavior (fornication) is a sin against God, the other person, and one's own body.
  - ► DW: "Sexuality is one of the most powerful and subtle forces in human nature, and the percentage of human suffering tied directly to it is horrifying. The human abuse stemming from sex... makes it imperative that we learn to 'control your body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen who do not know God'" I Thess. 4:4. [170]

► DW: "To practice chastity, we must first practice love and seek the good of those of the

► We sexualize and depersonalize another person when we envision them primarily as a sex object rather than as a human being with a soul who is made in the image of God.

| op | posite sex we come | into contact with | ." [172] |      |
|----|--------------------|-------------------|----------|------|
|    |                    |                   |          |      |
|    |                    |                   |          | <br> |
|    |                    |                   |          |      |

- The place of sex in marriage:
  - ► DW: "Sexuality cannot be allowed to permeate our lives" and even within the context of marriage, "it is absolutely vital to the health of any marriage that sexual gratification not be placed at the center." [171, 170]

### Secrecy (Humility or Meekness).

- Seek humility (or meekness) rather than glory, fame and attention.
  - ► Avoid self-promotion.
- God judges us not only on what we think, say and do, but on our motives.
  - ► Our goal should be to do nothing "out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than ourselves" Phil.2:3.
- Our calling is to be a source of Light, Love, Hope and Truth but it is God's prerogative whether or not our good words and deeds are noticed by many or few.
- Our true character is revealed in what we do in private. (!)
- True humility is a realistic acknowledgement of who and what we are our talents, gifts and knowledge but also our weaknesses and ignorance.

#### Sacrifice.

- Total abandonment to God: "Stepping into the dark abyss in the faith and hope that God will provide for us and sustain us." [175]
- Biblical examples:
  - ► Abraham Gen. 22:1-19; Heb. 11:19.
  - ► The poor widow Luke 21:20-4.

## **Disciplines of Engagement**

### Study.

• In *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard focuses primarily on reading Scripture as a meditative practice (*lectio divina*).

[NOTE: Richard Foster develops the discipline of study in greater depth in *Celebration of Discipline*.]

#### Worship.

- Worship is the practice of filling our hearts and minds with the wonder and majesty of our Creator and Redeemer.
  - ► DW: "In worship we engage ourselves with, dwell upon, and express the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God through thought and the use of words, rituals and symbols." [177]
- Worship should be a perpetual condition of our heart:

| •     | Rev. 4:11 – "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being." (Also Rev. 5:12-13.) |
|-------|---|
|       |   |
|       |   |
|       |   |
| ••••• |   |

#### Celebration.

- Celebration is the completion of worship as we acknowledge God's grace and goodness to us individually.
- Celebration inspires and energizes our life.
  - ► DW: "Celebration makes our deprivations and sorrows seem small, and we find in it great strength to do the will of God because his goodness becomes so real to us." [181]
  - ► DW: "We engage in celebration when we enjoy ourselves, our life, our world, in conjunction with our faith... in God's greatness, beauty and goodness." [179]
- Celebration includes not only joyful and exuberant corporate worship in a church service but also the joy of reading a great book, seeing a great movie or work of art, or taking a walk and being inspired by the wonders of nature. [180]

### Service.

- Service engages our time, energy, and resources to serve God and others.
- The more money, energy, influence and power we have in this life, the more we can serve others and expand the Kingdom of God in this world.
  - ► Jesus: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant... just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve" Matt. 20:25-28.
  - ► The example of foot-washing John 13:14.

### Prayer.

- Prayer is simply communicating with God.
  - Prayer can radically alter our soul if practiced honestly and in a spirit of faith.
  - ► DW: "It would of course be a rather low-voltage spiritual life in which prayer was chiefly undertaken as a discipline, rather than as a way of co-laboring with God to accomplish good things and advance his Kingdom purposes." [184]
  - ► O. Hallesby (1879-1961): "God has designed prayer as a means of intimate and joyous fellowship between God and man....

"To pray is nothing more involved than to let Jesus into our needs. To pray is to give Jesus permission to employ his powers in the alleviation of our distress....

"To pray is nothing more than to open the door, giving Jesus access to our needs and permitting him to exercise his power in dealing with them.... It is only a question of our wills." [O. Hallesby, *Prayer* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1931), pp. 12-13.]

► Rev. 3:20 – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and fellowship with him, and he with me."

|        | practices that will lead us into spiritual maturity. However central they are, they need to be supported by other spiritual disciplines.] |
|--------|---|
|        |   |
|        |   |
|        |   |
|        |   |
|        |   |
|        |   |
| •••••• |   |

[NOTE: In evangelical churches, prayer and Bible reading are usually presented as the sole

### Fellowship.

- The Christian life was never intended to a solitary pursuit.
  - ► Some people may have a special calling to live an isolated and cloistered life for a period of time, but in general we are called to be *in* the world but *not of* the world John 17:15-18.
  - ► As Jesus taught, we are to function was "the light of the world" Matt. 5:14.
- There is strength in community.
  - ► DW: "The diverse gifts or graces of the Spirit all of which are needed in some measure by each person from time to time are distributed among the separate members of the body of Christ, the church."
  - ► I Cor. 12:7-11 "To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good...."
  - ► Heb. 10:25 "Let us not give up meeting together,... but let us encourage one another."

#### Confession.

- James 5:16 "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed.
  - ► The "healing" may be physical, spiritual or emotional.
- Our spiritual lives can be strengthened through deep, intimate relationships with trusted brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we share in confidence our greatest struggles and failures with complete transparency.
- Open and honest confession of sins helps strengthen our commitment to Christ and enhances our spiritual growth.
  - ► DW: "Confession can also help us to avoid sin.... Nothing is more supportive of right behavior than open truth....
    - "Confession... makes deep fellowship possible, and the lack of it explains much of the superficial quality so commonly found in our church associations." [188]
- In addition to confession of sins, restitution might sometimes be necessary if we have wrongly offended or hurt someone.

#### Submission.

- A form of humility in which we recognize that we are called to be servants of all.
  - ► Eph. 5:21 "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."
  - ▶ Phil. 2:3 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to that of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

| • | Christians who are older, more experienced, more knowledgeable and wiser should    |
|---|--|
|   | sometimes defer to those who are younger, less experienced and less knowledgeable. |

► I John 4:7 – "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God."

| • | • |  |
|---|---|--|
|   |   |  |
|   |   |  |
|   |   |  |
|   |   |  |
|   |   |  |
|   |   |  |
|   |   |  |

### **Afterwords**

### Epilogue.

- The purpose of this book is to show how to live as Jesus lived in harmony with God the Father through the internal guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- The "Spirit of the Disciplines" is nothing less than the desire to deepen our love of God through the internal guidance of the Holy Spirit in keeping with the example and lifestyle that Jesus modeled.
- Our challenge:
  - ▶ DW: "It is time to take what you have learned and make your own specific plan for your life. This will come down to what you do [not only on Sunday but every day of the week].... You will be challenged to consider how thoroughly you are committed to following Jesus, and you find that your commitment is remarkably flabby and thin because it has never been translated into how you spend your time [and what your true priorities are in life]." [252]

# Appendix II: Discipleship – for Super-Christians Only?

- The state of the modern church: the problem of "undisciplined disciples".
  - ▶ DW: "For [many] decades the church of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian.... Contemporary American churches in particular do not require following Christ in his example, spirit, and teachings as a condition for membership.... So far as the visible Christian institutions of our day are concerned, discipleship is optional." [258-59]
- The message of the Great Commission is to make disciples.
- It's all about priorities.

• The solution: Romans 12:1-2.

- ► DW: "The disciple is one who, intent upon becoming Christlike,... systematically and progressively rearranges his affairs [and priorities] to that end." [261]
- ▶ By contrast, the nondisciple... has a different agenda: self-fulfillment, social status, wealth, power, pleasure, "fun" and entertainment. [262]
- "Cheap grace" and "the cost of discipleship".
  - ▶ Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937): the problem of "cheap grace".
- Pop evangelicalism and the problem of "relevancy".
  - ► When wholistic discipleship is ignored, Christians forfeit the integrity of the faith.
  - ► The church today has relatively little influence on how its members prioritize their time, energy, and resources.
  - ► Furthermore, the church today has little influence in our culture.