

Celebration of Discipline The Path to Spiritual Growth Richard Foster

(HarperSanFrancisco, 1978, 1998. Twentieth Anniversary Edition)

Introduction

Cover Blurb.

• "Hailed by many as the best modern book on Christianity spirituality, *Celebration of Discipline* explores the 'classic Disciplines', or central spiritual practices, of the Christian faith.... [I]t is only by and through these practices that the true path to spiritual growth can be found."

Forward by Elton Trueblood.

- "There are many books concerned with the inner life, but there are not many that combine real originality with intellectual integrity." [x]
- The greatest problems of our time are not social, economic or political they are moral and spiritual. [xi]

Richard Foster (b. 1942).

- Richard Foster is a former Quaker pastor and seminary professor.
 - ► In 1988 Foster founded Renovaré, a ministry devoted to Christian "spiritual formation."
- In 2001 *Christianity Today* listed *Celebration of Discipline* as one of the 10 most significant/influential books of the 20th century.
- Significant influences that enriched his life and ministry.
 - (1) "An influx of genuinely needy people into our small congregation"... who were "hungry for spiritual substance."
 - RF: "I began desiring this kind of life for myself. And desiring led to seek and seeking led to finding." [xiv]
 - (2) The influence of philosopher Dallas Willard.
 - Willard's teaching "gave me the *Weltanschaung*, the worldview, upon which I could synthesize all my academic and biblical training."
- Foster's "quiet [spiritual] revelation."

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1. The Spiritual Disciplines: Door to Liberation

"Everybody thinks of changing [society] but nobody thinks of changing himself." – Leo Tolstoy

Fulfilling Our Calling.

- RF: "Spiritual growth is the purpose of the Disciplines." [8]
- RF: "Superficiality is the curse of our age."
 - Craving constant stimulation and instant gratification "is primarily a spiritual problem."
 - ▶ We don't need more smart or gifted or successful people we need people who think and live on a deeper level.
- "The classical Disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths" so as to "explore the inner caverns of the spiritual realm." [1]
 - ▶ RF: "Perhaps somewhere in the subterranean chambers of your life you have heard the call to deeper, fuller living. You have become weary of [superficial] experiences and shallow [preaching and] teaching." [2]

Two Blockages to Spiritual Growth.

- (1) A shallow and materialistic orientation.
- (2) Ignorance regarding spiritual growth.
- Christians typically try to deal with sinful thoughts, words, actions by exerting "will-power".
- Both the will and the power to be spiritually transformed is a gift from God.
 - ► It is part of the sanctification process. [6]
 - ► Spiritual growth is the product of a sustained practice of traditional spiritual disciplines. [8]

2. Meditation

Contemplative Prayer.

- Q: Why does Richard Foster begin his study of the spiritual disciplines with meditation rather than discursive prayer?
 - ► Christian meditation (contemplative prayer) stills and focuses one's mind so as to commune with God through the internal presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - ► Valerie Hess: Meditation is ruminating on a word or phrase from Scripture and letting it sink deeply into our hearts. [Spiritual Disciplines Devotional (IVP, 2007), p. 24.]
 - ► Jesus' promise of the "Comforter" (John 16:13).
 - ▶ Psalm 119:2, 10, 97 "I seek you with all my heart.... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.... I meditate on [your law] all daylong."

► The goal of Christian mediation is to clear one's mind so as to focus fully on God.

- Christian meditation is fundamentally antithetical to non-Christian forms of meditation.
 - ► The goal of non-Christian meditation is to empty one's mind.

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- The discipline of *hesychasm*: voluntary stillness (rest or quietness) so as to commune with God.
 - ▶ The "Jesus Prayer": "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
 - ► Meditation allows the Holy Spirit to construct an "inner sanctuary" in our heart.
 - ► Theophan the Recluse: "To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart." [19]
- Meditation confirms the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.

Meditation and Imagination.

- Assessing our impressions by the standards of Scripture.
 - ► RF: "Some object to using the imagination out of concern that it is untrustworthy and can even be used by the Evil One. There is good reason for concern, for the imagination, like all our faculties, [has been affected by] the Fall. But just as we can believe that God can take our reason (fallen as it is) and sanctify it and use it for his good purposes, so we believe he can sanctify the imagination and use it for his good purposes. Of course, the imagination can be distorted by Satan, but then so can all our faculties." [26]

Dealing with Distractions.

- Our over-stimulating and unhealthy society and culture.
- RF: "[T]o move beyond the superficialities of our culture, including our religious culture, we must go down into the recreating silences, into the inner world of contemplation." [15]

The Value of Meditation.

- Christian meditation is practical:
 - Meditation helps us to focus and discipline our mind in such a way as to live and interact with the world more effectively.
 - ► Meditation helps us absorb and practice the Greatest Commandment(s).
 - Meditation is spiritually restorative and has practical benefits mentally, emotionally and physically.
- RF: "How sad that contemporary Christians are so ignorant of the vast sea of literature on Christian meditation." [19]

How to Meditate.

- RF: "We learn to mediate by meditating." [26]
- Contemplative prayer as a way of life.
 - ► Apostle Paul: "Pray continually" (I Thes. 5:17).
- A time and place.
- What about posture?

Forms of Meditation.

- Lectio devina (or meditatio scripturarum).
 - Meditation on Scripture.
 - ▶ Personalize and internalize a passage, a verse, or even a single word and "allow it to take root in you." [29]

► Meditation and creative visualization.

- Other options:
 - ► Meditate on particular sins and/or challenges.
 - ► Meditate on relationships with others.
 - ► Meditate on the character of God and the wonders of creation (Ps. 19:1).
 - ► Meditate on the events and challenges of our time.

Eastern v. Christian meditation.

- Ref. Jefrey Breshears, "Christian and Eastern Spirituality: The Fundamental Differences."
 - (1) Theology;
 - (2) Psychology;
 - (3) Christianity's Christocentric focus; and
 - (4) The ultimate goal.
- The goal of Eastern mediation is self-centered: to empty one's mind through the repetition of a nonsense mantra so as to become detached from the world.
- The goal of Christian mediation is God-centered: to clear one's mind so as to fill our heart with the word of God and become a source of Light, Love, Hope and Truth in the world.

Reconciling contemplative prayer with Protestant Christianity.

- Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox mysticism.
- The influence of Martin Luther.

3. Prayer

Discursive Prayer: The Central Practice of the Christian Life.

- RF: "Of all the Spiritual Disciplines prayer is the most central because it ushers us into perpetual communion with [God] the Father.... Prayer is the central avenue God uses to transform us."
 - ► RF: "In prayer we begin to think God's thoughts after him, to desire the things he desires, to love the things he loves, to will the things he wills." [33]

What is Prayer?

- In discursive prayer, we praise and thank God for his greatness and goodness.
- In discursive prayer we pour out our plans, cares and concerns, hopes and fears before God because we believe that he cares.
- Learn to be a spiritual warrior who prays against evil.
 - ► I Peter 5:8 Pray against the evil "principalities and powers" that seek to devour our mind, soul, and body.
- The role of imagination in prayer.
- Practice praying for everyone you encounter.
- As we grow more spiritually mature, our will becomes more aligned with that of Christ. Q: If God is sovereign, omniscient and omnipotent, why pray?

4. Fasting

Introduction.

- A "forgotten" spiritual discipline.
 - ► RF: "In my research I could not find a single book published on the subject of fasting from 1861 to 1954." [47]
- The unfortunate stereotype:
 - ▶ RF: "Fasting has developed a bad reputation as a result of the excessive ascetic practices of the Middle Ages.... Fasting was subjected to the most rigid regulations and practiced with extreme self-mortification and flagellation." [47]
- Modern myths regarding fasting.

The Purpose of Fasting.

- A challenging and difficult discipline.
- The spiritual discipline of fasting must be God-centered rather than merely health-centered.
 - ► RF: "More than any other Discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us." [55]

The Process of Fasting.

- RF: "Biblical fasting always centers on spiritual purposes" rather than primarily health concerns. [49]
- In most cases fasting is a private matter between the individual and God.
- The value of corporate fasts.
- Jesus fasted (Luke 4:2).
 - ► Jesus taught, "and when you fast..." (Matt. 6:16).
- The early church often fasted when praying for specific matters.
 - ► Acts 13:2.
 - ► Acts 14:23.
- Jesus condemned the Pharisees for self-righteous fasting.
- The *Didache* prescribed two fast days a week: Wednesday and Friday.
- John Wesley's standard.
- "Progressive" fasting.

The Summa.

- Fasting is a spiritual discipline more than a physical one.
 - ► Valerie Hess: "Fasting is abstaining from otherwise normal activities for the sake of intense spiritual focus." [Spiritual Disciplines Devotional (IVP Books, 2007), p. 62.]

► Regular fasting from TV, the news, on-line videos and surfing the net, sports, music, etc.

- Fasting and spiritual warfare.
 - ► Ephesians 6:10ff the "armor of God."
- The principle of fasting can (and should) be extended into many areas of life.
 - ► We live in an over-stimulating and frenetic society and culture.

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5. Study

Our Ultimate Purpose.

- The ultimate purpose of life is to become more like Christ.
- The spiritual disciplines are essential to this whole process.
 - ► RF: "The purpose of the Spiritual Disciplines is the total transformation of the person." [62]
 - ► The Spiritual Disciplines aim at replacing old destructive habits of thought with new lifegiving habits.
- Pursue holiness, righteousness, and wisdom.
 - Wisdom is the faithful and prudent application of knowledge and understanding.
- The discipline of study and the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom are essential to spiritual growth as our mind is transformed.
 - ▶ Romans 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern [worldview, values, etc.] of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is his good, pleasing and perfect will."
 - ► Study contributes to the conversion of our mind, and what we study determines the kind of habits that are formed.
 - ► Jesus: "You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).
 - ► RF: "Good feelings will not free us. Ecstatic experiences will not free us. Getting 'high on Jesus' will not free us. Without a knowledge of the truth, we will not be free....

"What we study determines the kind of habits that are formed, which is why Paul urges us to focus on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and gracious" (Gal. 5:22-23). [63, 64]

The Priorities.

1. The Bible.

- *Prima scriptura:* the Bible as our primary and supreme source of Truth.
 - II Tim. 3:16.
 - An objective framework for assessing our ideas and impulses.
- ► The discipline of study conditions us to concentrate on truths that matter in a culture that is constantly distracting us and enticing us to waste our time and energy on frivolous entertainment and the pursuit of worldly values (power, wealth, status, etc.).
- ► True disciples of Christ want to broaden and deepen their faith and their understanding of what it means to be a Christian in today's world.
 - RF: "The average adult Sunday School class is far too superficial and devotional to help us study the Bible. [69]

• I Peter 3:15 – "In your heart set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give

► The role of apologetics:

an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have

2. Classic Christian Literature.

- ► The writings of the early Church Fathers.
- Spiritual classics.

[Note: "Recommended Readings in Christian Spirituality" at www.TheAreopagus.org.]

- 3. Christian History.
- 4. General History.
- 5. Philosophy.
- 6. Christian Apologetics.
- 7. Contemporary Cultural Analyses.

Maximizing Study.

- Study is best facilitated in the context of a community of believers.
 - ► RF: "When we gather for discussion, debate, and Socratic dialogue insights emerge that would never have come without this exchange. We interact with the author, with each other, and new creative ideas are born....

"Remember that the key to the Discipline of study is not reading many books, but experiencing what we do read." [68, 72]

• The acquisition of true knowledge and wisdom can become a passion. [76]

6. Simplicity

Introduction: The Gift of Simplicity.

- Note: This might be the most powerful and convicting chapter in Celebration of Discipline.
- RF: "[S]implicity is an inward reality that results in an outward life-style."
 - "Simplicity is freedom.... Simplicity brings joy and balance."
- "Tis a Gift to be Simple."
- RF: "Simplicity begins in inward focus and unity."
 - ► "Speech becomes truthful and honest. The lust for status and position is gone because we no longer need status and position. We cease from showy extravagance"... we become more open to sharing possessions with others. [80]
- A commentary on contemporary culture:
 - ▶ RF: "We are trapped in a maze of competing attachments.... Because we lack a divine Center our need for security has led us into an insane attachment to things. [T]he 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 are made to feel ashamed to wear clothes or drive cars until they are worn out. The mass media convinces us that to be out of step with [current] fashion 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. [80-81]

The Bible and Simplicity.

- The obsession with money and possessions?
 - ► Matt. 6:33.
- The Old Testament concept of Jubilee Lev. 25:23, 13.
- Jesus was forthright in his condemnation of those whose priority in life is acquiring wealth.
 - ► Luke 6:20, 24.
 - ► Matt. 6:19-20; 24.
 - ► Mark 10:17-21.
- The NT has much to say about the pursuit of wealth.
 - ▶ I Tim. 6:9 "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."
 - ► I Tim. 3:3, 8.
 - ► Heb. 13:5.
 - ► Eph. 5:5.
 - ► I Cor. 5:11.
- The Bible does not condemn wealth per se nor does it advocate strict asceticism or poverty.
 - ► II Thes. 3:10.

Ten Regulating Principles for Countercultural Christians.

- (1) Buy only what you must, and buy only for its usefulness not to impress others.
- (2) Control or eliminate anything that might become an addiction.
- (3) Develop a habit of giving things away.
- (4) Resist the urge to buy every latest techno-toy and every newest-and-best consumer item.
- (5) Learn to enjoy things without owning them.
- (6) Enjoy God's creation.
- (7) Be a prudent and thoughtful consumer.
- (8) Use plain, honest (and decent) speech (Eph. 4:29; 5:4).
- (9) Reject anything that degrades or leads to the oppression others.
- (10) Shun anything that distracts you from our number one priority in life: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."
 - ► Remember: All we have in this life humanly speaking are...
 - (1) Time
 - (2) Energy
 - (3) Resources
 - (4) Priorities.

7. Solitude (and Silence).

The Sanctuary of the Heart.

• The internal presence of the Holy Spirit.

Solitude v. Loneliness.

• Loneliness is a state of inner detachment and emptiness; solitude is a state of inner fulfillment.

The Example of Jesus.

- Jesus' practice of solitude and silence.
 - ► Matt. 4:1-11.
 - ► Luke 6:12.
 - ► Matt. 14:13.
 - ► Mark 6:31.
 - ► Matt. 26:36-46.

The Virtue of Silence.

- Solitude and silence are inseparable.
- RF: "The purpose of silence and solitude is to be able to see and hear" (with spiritually-sensitive eyes and ears).
 - ► RF: "Under the discipline of silence and solitude we learn when to speak and when to refrain from speaking." [98]

The Dark Night of the Soul.

- John of the Cross (1542-91).
- "The Dark Night of the Soul" (c. 1578): A narrative poem on the spiritual journey of the soul to mystical union with God.
 - [Note: This is a "mystical" (spiritual) union not a metaphysical union with God.]
- A spiritual longing and a calling to commune with God during a time of great physical, mental, emotional stress or spiritual crisis.
 - ► A "divine appointment" so as "to set us free" spiritually, mentally and emotionally.
 - Seek "an inner transformation" of our soul through the internal power of the Holy Spirit.
- Three phases:
 - (1) Purgation: Confession of sins and self-centeredness.
 - Disassociation (or detachment) from the people and things of this world.

(3) Union with the divine: Acquiring "the mind of Christ" and fulfilling our ultimate

- RF: "Every distraction of the body, mind, and spirit" is quieted until we reach a point of "inner silence, peace, [and] stillness."
- (2) Illumination: An awakening to the realities of the state of one's soul and the realities of life in general.

	calling in this life				
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Practical Suggestions.

- Practicing God's presence.
 - ▶ RF: "The Spiritual Disciplines are things that we do.... We are dealing with actions, not merely states of mind.... If we are to succeed, we must pass beyond the theoretical into life situations." [105]
- Set aside a "quiet place" in the home one's own *poustinia* (Catherine de Haeck Doherty).
- Take advantage of common ordinary experiences and sensations.
- Control our communication.
 - ► RF: "Let's discipline ourselves so that our words are few and full. Let's become known as people who hve something to say when we speak."
 - ► Think before you speak, and use words correctly.
- Plan to escape to a quiet place periodically so as to think, pray and meditate uninterrupted.

The Spiritual Benefits.

- RF: "The fruit of solitude is increased sensitivity" toward the things of God, our own needs and the needs of others.
 - ► Thomas Merton: "It is in deep solitude that I find the gentleness with which I can truly love my brothers."
 - ► RF: "Like Jesus, we must go away from people so that we can be truly present when we are with people." [108]
- RF: "Goals are discovered.... God delights in showing us exciting new alternatives for the future." [108]

8. Submission

The Purpose of the Disciplines.

- Spiritual disciplines are the means toward a greater good.
- RF: "The purpose of the Disciplines is freedom" so as to realize a greater good: a life of total dedication to Christ. [110]

Relinquishing Control.

- The key is self-denial and faith in God's goodness and control over our lives.
 - ▶ RF: "Self-denial is the foundation for submission: it saves us from self-indulgence." [114]
- Jesus calls us to a radically different approach to life.
 - Rather than seeking control over other people, we are called to be servants of all.
 - Mark 9:35.
 - Eph. 5:21.
 - ► Jesus exemplified this principle in his own life.
 - Phil. 2:3-8.

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► EX: Jesus washing the feet of his disciples (John 13:14-15).

- Voluntary submission applies to all our relationships.
 - ► This applies to the laws of our nation provided that they are 'just' laws (Acts 5:29).

A Hierarchy of Allegiances.

- (1) Submission to God.
 - ► Matt. 22:37-38.
- (2) Submission to Scripture.
 - ► Psalm 119:11.
- (3) Submission to our family.
 - ► Phil. 2:4.
- (4) Submission to "neighbors" friends, etc.
 - ► Matt. 22:39.
 - ► Rom. 15:2.
- (5) Submission to other Christians.
 - ► Eph. 5:21.
 - ► I Thes. 5:11.
 - ► I Cor. 14:12.
- (6) Submission to those who are needy and struggling in this life.
- (7) Submission to the people of the world.

A Warning to Those in Positions of Authority.

• RF: "Of all the Spiritual Disciplines none has been more abused than the Discipline of submission." [110]

9. Service

The Gift of Service.

- The values of the Kingdom of God are radically different than those of "the world".
- The example of Jesus: "I have set you an example that you should do what I have done for you" (John 13:1-17).
- The Kingdom of God is about service to others, not power over them.
 - ► RF: "Jesus completely redefined leadership and rearranged the lines of authority.... [127]
 - ▶ Jesus: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you.... Whoever would be great among you must be your servant... even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt. 20:25-28).
 - ► Jesus: Treat everyone equally regardless of their condition or status in society be a "servant of all" (Mark 9:35).
- Some people 'serve' in order to enhance their own self-esteem and impress others.
 - True serve is humble and meek, and does not seek the attention of others.
 Self-righteous service is selective in terms of who and when it serves. [129]

- Service as a lifestyle:
 - ► RF: "True service is a life-style" not an occasional impulse. [129]
 - ▶ RF: It is all "the difference between choosing to serve and choosing to be a servant. When we choose to serve, we are still in charge. We decide whom we will serve and when we will serve.... But when we choose to be a servant, we give up the right to be in charge.... We become available and vulnerable." [132]
- The virtue of listening requires that we honestly *care* about others.

Service and Humility.

- RF: "Of all the classical spiritual disciplines, [true] service is the most conducive to the growth of humility." [130]
- True humility transforms everything we do into an act of service to God and to others.
 - ► Titus 3:2 "[B]e ready to do whatever is good,... to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility to everyone."
- Humility contains and controls "the flesh" our egocentric and sinful desires.
 - ► RF: "The strictest daily discipline is necessary to hold these passions in check."
 - ► RF: "The result of this daily discipline of the flesh will be the rise of the grace of humility.... People whom we would have passed over before we now 'see' and find to be delightful individuals." [131]

[Note: As C.S. Lewis wrote, "There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal." Everyone is a unique individual created in the image of God.]

• A daily prayer: "Lord Jesus, please bring me someone today whom I can serve." [140]

10. Confession

A Vital Discipline for Christian Discipleship.

- This chapter on confession is probably the most challenging for evangelicals to process.
- Most Protestants conceive of confession only as a private matter between oneself and God.
- Richard Foster emphasizes the role of the priest in hearing, praying for, and offering guidance to the penitent sinner.
 - ► All Christians are "priests" in keeping with the doctrine of the "priesthood of all believers."
 - ► I Pet. 2:9 "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation...."
 - ► Therefore, mature Christians are capable of serving as confessors. [145]
- Spiritual salvation as a lifelong process.
 - ▶ Phil. 2:12 "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

Salvation is an ongoing process of spiritual growth and sanctification in which we

humbly and reverently resolve to fulfill our calling in Christ.

The Mandate and Process of Confession.

- Formal confession encourages honesty.
 - ► RF: "The purpose of penance is to help us move into that deeper sense of the sinfulness of sin." [149]
 - ► RF: "Honesty leads to confession, and confession leads to change." [157]
- There is only "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).
 - ► However: We are also told to "confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another" (James 5:16).
- Confession to another person is humbling.
 - ► RF: "We cannot bear to reveal our failures and shortcomings to others.... Therefore, we hide ourselves from one another and live in veiled lies and hypocrisy....

"[However, we also know that] we are not alone in our sin. The fear and pride that cling to us like barnacles cling to others also. We are sinners together. In acts of mutual confession we release the power that heals. Our humanity is no longer denied, but transformed." [145-46]

- RF: "The followers of Jesus Christ have been given the authority to receive the confession of sin and to forgive it in his name."
 - ▶ Jesus told his disciples: "If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven" (John 20:23).
 - ► RF: "What a wonderful privilege! Why do we shy away from such a life-giving ministry?" [146]
 - Q: Do we in fact have the power and authority to pardon others for their sins? What if they have sinned against another person shouldn't they need to confess and repent both before God and the person whom they have wronged?

What about Psalm 51:1-4? "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.... Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight." How does this correlate to Matt. 18:15-18?]

The Character and Role of the Confessor.

- A confessor must be someone who is spiritually mature, wise, open and honest, compassionate, trustworthy, and discerning.
- A confessor must have a gift of discernment.
- The utilization of a cross and the laying on of hands. Q: What about a sin that the penitent cannot bare to openly confess?

Practical Confession.

- While pastoring his first church, Richard Foster "longed for more power to do the work of God."
- An intentional plan:
 - List anything from the past for which we need forgiveness or healing.
 - ► Open and honest discussion with a trusted counselor/confessor.
- Three essentials for effecting confession: [151-53]
 - (1) An examination of conscience.
 - Dealing with specific sins.
 - RF: "A generalized confession may save us from humiliation and shame, but it will not ignite inner healing."
 - (2) Sincere sorrow.
 - (3) True repentance a determination to avoid sin.
 - II Cor. 7:10 "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation."
- RF: "Confession begins in sorrow, but it ends in joy.

11. Worship

The Discipline of Worship.

- Worship of God is a divine command and the Greatest Commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." [Mark 12:30]
- Worship is an innately spiritual act.
 - We worship God when our spirit is ignited and kindled by the Spirit of God.
 - ► When we worship God, we enter into the awesome, glorious, gracious presence of the living God and acknowledge his lordship over our lives.
 - ► Therefore, true worship has the potential to not only inspire us but transform our hearts and minds.
- Worship is our response to God's will to initiate, restore, and maintain a spiritual relationship with us.
 - ▶ Jesus: "You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve" Matt. 4:10.
 - ► Jesus: "True worshipers "worship the Father in spirit and truth..." John 4:23.
 - ▶ Apostle Paul: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God" − Col. 3:16.
- RF: "To worship is to experience Reality, to touch Life. It is to know, to feel, to experience the resurrected Christ in the midst of a gathered community."

• Forms, rituals, prayers and music are only important to the extent that they facilitate our

longing for spiritual union with God.

Practicing His Presence.

- RF: "I dedicated one whole year to learning how to live with a perpetual openness to Jesus as my [ever-] present Teacher.... My desire was to punctuate each minute with inward whisperings of adoration, praise and thanksgiving." [162]
 - Learn to practice the presence of God daily... Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17)... "Punctuate every moment with inward whisperings of adoration, praise and thanksgiving. Have personal times of inner worship, confession and Bible study. [170-71]

True Worship.

- Worship is enhanced when we meet and interact with other committed believers in Christ.
 - ► As Martin Luther commented, "[A]t home, in my own house, there is no warmth or vigor in me, but in the church when the multitude is gathered together, a fire is kindled in my heart and it breaks its way through." [164]
- What about different styles of worship?
- Leading others in true corporate worship is a spiritual gift.
 - ► Otherwise, it can detract from true worship.
- True worship should not be confused with religious entertainment.
 - ▶ Worship leaders are only facilitators (channels or mediums) for transcendent worship.
 - ► They should not seek to be the center of attention, nor should they distract others from the transcendent joy and peace and inspiration of true worship.
 - ► Too many worship leaders look and act like "performers".
- Worship is a form of spiritual warfare, and some types of music are unsuited for true worship. [Note: If a song or a style of music is not mentally-healthy, it cannot be spiritually healthy!]
- If worship does not inspire and motivate us to change and to greater commitment and obedience is has not been true worship.

13. Celebration

A Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

- Appropriately, Celebration of Discipline ends with the discipline of celebration.
- RF: "Of all people, [Christians] should be the most free, alive, [and] interesting."
 - ► "Celebration adds a note of gaiety, festivity, [and humor] to our lives.... Celebration helps us relax and enjoy the good things [of life]." [196]
- Celebration is central to all the Spiritual Disciplines.
 - ► RF: "Without a joyful spirit the Disciplines become dull [and legalistic obligations]."
 - ► RF: "A spirit of joy energizes our life." [191]
- Luke 4:18-21 Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming the Year of Jubilee an age of [spiritual] liberation.

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- ▶ Phil. 4:4-7 "Rejoice in the Lord always.... Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- A commitment to joy helps us transcend our own ego-centeredness.

The Path to Joy.

- RF: "In the spiritual life only one thing will produce genuine joy, and that is obedience." [192]
- Joy as a by-product of setting the right priorities in life.
 - ► Phil. 4:8 Concentrate on "whatever is true,... noble,... right,... pure,... lovely,... admirable,... excellent or praiseworthy...."

12. Guidance

Corporate Discernment.

- Everyone has his/her own unique calling in life.
 - Acts 17:25: "The God who made the world and everything in it gives us life and breath and everything else. From one man he [made us all];... and he determined the times set for us and the exact places where we should live. God did this so that we would seek him... and find him... for in him we live and move and have our being."
- How do we hear God's voice, respond to his calling, and fulfill our purpose in life?
- The importance of involvement in an intentional group that is committed to spiritual growth.
 - ► God does guide us individually, but he can also guide us through our association with other like-minded Christians. [176]
 - ▶ Dallas Willard: "The aim of God in history is the creation of an all-inclusive community of loving persons" under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who are "determined to live out the demands of the gospel in a secular world." [189]
 - ► Acts 13:1-3 Through corporate guidance, Paul and Barnabas were commissioned to take the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

The Role of the Spiritual Director.

- Our spiritual lives can be greatly enhanced throughout regular interaction with a spiritual director one who is wise, perceptive, honest, and trustworthy who can encourage us and help us think through the issues and challenges of our life.
 - ► C. S. Lewis: "Our real protection [from selfish and trivial distractions] is to be sought... in moral theology, in steady rational thinking, in the advice of good [wise] friends and good books, and in a skilled spiritual director." ["A Slip of the Tongue" in *The Weight of Glory*.]

Spiritual direction is a wholistic ministry concerned not only with one's spiritual/ religious life but with all the important issues and relationships in life.

A spiritual director need not have professional training in psychology and counseling.	