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# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

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SF503 – INITIATION IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION



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November 19, 2020

## **The Discipline of Meditation**

One of my favorite Psalms is Psalm 1:2 "... and in his law doth he meditate day and night." I wish I could say that I practice this on a regular basis, but I don't. I, however, am taking time at the start of this class to silence my spirit, spending time walking through the park and am experiencing peace from God. Also, I meditate on scriptures with constant verbal repetition as I walk through the park for a couple hours at a time. Before I get out of the bed, I now take the time to meditate on scriptures; One of them is II Tim. 1:7. I experience deliverance of fear as I use and meditate on this scripture. I find the meditation on this scripture breaks the cycle of the negative thoughts trying to invade my mind. Thus, I experience deliverance.

So much of my lived history informs me that I need to act now, do what I believe is best and there is no time to wait; these are my obstacles to meditation. I really in my heart of heart want to practice this discipline, so this week I now compel my spirit to wait and meditate even before getting out of the bed to start my day. This is my experience with this discipline since the start of this class. In so doing, the cycle of negative thoughts is breaking.

Jesus let us know that "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge..." John 5:13. "...Jesus modeled for us the reality of that life of hearing and obeying..."<sup>1</sup> He is teaching me to be still and know that He is God; He is working it out for me. Knowing what I now know, I will continue to prayerfully ask God to continue to make this one of my rhythms of life.

## **The Discipline of Study**

The Discipline of Study is one of my strengths. Having the divine gift to teach, I enjoy studying and analyzing information, giving contemplative thoughts to the subject matter for an

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<sup>1</sup> Foster, Richard, Celebration of Disciplines, pg. 18

audience or student body. Furthermore, I relish the revelatory knowledge from the Word of God and to challenge students to contemplate scriptures to acquire truth. This is my image of the word Study.

This week, I studied doing a deep dive into certain scriptures. For example, I looked at Isa. 7:14, 9:6 comparing them with Matt. 1:22-23, among other scriptures. Upon reflection and discussion with others, the Deity of Christ and prophecy of His rule illuminated. This type of study and contemplation deepened my understanding of Christ. I have studied these scriptures before; but I find with the repetition of studying them again, I have a greater focus and concentration where my understanding of the Deity of Christ deepens. This repetition causes my mind to singularly focus, establishing concentration on the subject matter, going beyond mere comprehension. Therefore, with regard to reflection and comprehension, "...[a]lthough comprehension defines what we are studying, reflection defines the *significance* of what we are studying..."<sup>2</sup> Hence, I will continue this type of studying to continue to receive an inner transformation.

### **The Discipline of Submission**

Generally, submission conjures the image of submitting to those who have the rule over me whether in the workplace, church, etc. But I now realize it is much more than that; it is about yielding one to another and not always wanting your own way. What I find annoying is when someone encroaches on my space. This week, I had a family member do just that. The person put a number of personal items in my space in the basement. It was upsetting to say the least but I also realize I have a control issue. Normally, I would say something but this time I just prayed

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<sup>2</sup> ibid., pg. 66

and asked the Lord to pour greater love in my heart. I believe in order to have this kind of self-denial, God has to increase my capacity of love, preferring the interest of others over myself. Of course, I don't advocate being a door mat for people to walk all over you; for me, however, I understand through the Spirit that I should not be controlling. After the encroachment, a song came up in my spirit: the battle is not yours, it is the Lord. Therefore, I must submit to the scripture. "...The dictum for...[my] household should be "Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4)..."<sup>3</sup>

### **The Discipline of Fasting**

I can clearly remember my introduction to fasting after getting saved under an Apostolic ministry. I was 20-years-old in secular college and would pray and fast upon church leaders' requests. I did not have a difficult time sustaining the fast nor was I resistant to it. I experienced church leaders suggesting it to be more of a command rather than a choice. Furthermore, Old Testament scriptures were used by church leaders to support that it is a command. But as Foster states, "...[t]here simply are no biblical laws that command regular fasting..."<sup>4</sup> I believe as Foster that [o]ur freedom in the gospel... does not mean license; it means opportunity."<sup>5</sup>

I spent time fasting, having one meal for the day while reducing my activity for a few days. This helped me to become more center and have a greater God-consciousness throughout the day. I found myself without the normal energy which caused me to reflect upon my dependency on the Lord. Fasting reinforced my dependency on God. Man should not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:1-4). I, however,

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<sup>3</sup> ibid., pg. 122

<sup>4</sup> ibid., pg. 51

<sup>5</sup> ibid., pg. 51

don't feel I fast enough. I believe this discipline of fasting should be more regular in my life, and I will work toward that end.

### **The Discipline of Prayer**

My first answered prayer that I can recall happened when I was about 10-years-old. While walking my dog, it escaped from me. My dad was very upset with me, thinking I allowed the dog to escape because I did not want to walk it. We both searched for the dog that night to no avail. The next morning, I earnestly prayed to find the dog. The prayer was only a few minutes but I sensed an "inner yes" that I would find my dog. The next morning, I found the dog right where the Lord led me to go, a block away from where it escaped the night before.

Generally, I earnestly call upon the Lord in the name of Jesus out of desperation rather than a normal rhythm of life. I, however, took the time this week to shut in and stay before the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving. Being shut in hours at a time, I experienced a greater sensitivity to the move of the Lord as I reflect upon Psalms 91 and 121. I felt a greater empathy for loved ones I was praying for. During this sustained prayer time, I found myself more at peace with God, self and others. I am reminded of John 15:5-7 where we can do nothing without Christ. One of my pitfalls is that I try to do everything without Christ.

I now tell myself that I am a "co-laborer with God" (1Cor. 3:9) and not an independent spirit. We are working together to bring about a specific outcome. Furthermore, I have to trust God where I cannot trace Him. I have to find the Glory in the cloud. My prayer is to listen and obey God's voice.

### **The Discipline of Confession**

I can remember my confession for salvation at the age of 20 as if it were yesterday. Particularly, I remember after my confession of sin and the receiving of Jesus for salvation that the minister said to me “salvation is a gift.” He illustrated this by handing me his Bible, saying it is something given and could never be earned. That resonated with me until this day because it meant for me the depth of the love of Christ and now a “conscious choice of action.”

Just like Christ loved and gave His life while we were yet sinners, we have the capacity to make a “conscious choice of action” to love and forgive. I don’t have too many people in my circle which I confess to. I have a couple of pastors that I could go to in confidence. I have not done it in a while, so I was glad when I felt comfortable enough to confess some things to Pastor Nestor. I expressed to him some of my experiences of family scarring with great details where I struggled with forgiveness. I felt it turned into a counseling session that I needed more than I thought. He also shared with me some of his family history which helped me to realize that I am not alone in family struggles.

This was not only cathartic but truly purging and gave me emotional healing. The result has made me yearn for more of this in my life and has continued me on the road of maturity “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4:13). I am still a work in progress.

### **The Discipline of Worship**

My definition of worship is entering into the presence of God. I do this through prayer, worship songs and meditation on scriptures, carving out a specific time to have uninterrupted time with the King of kings. I find worship songs in particular a good source to usher me into the presence of God. Therefore, I spend days secluded before the Lord with worship songs and prayers. I began to feel a stillness and peace all around me. I felt the pressing of the Lord to

pray for various individuals, and He placed in my heart empathy and compassion for them. I also felt a decluttering of my spirit of things from the previous weeks of activities.

When I can declutter my mind and focus on God alone, there is a freedom I experience in my spirit. Furthermore, I have experienced healing in my body (blood pressure regulated) and guidance to my soul (let go and let God be in control). As I entered into the presence of God, I sense a greater sensitivity to the move of God.

### **The Discipline of Solitude**

Solitude for me is to silence the noise and commotion around me, going for long walks, listening for God's voice, examining my inner thoughts and experiences. Since I can remember as a child, I have generally been attracted to solitude. Moreover, solitude is definitely a strength which I practice but feel that I could do more in creating time and space for solitude.

This week, I was under a lot of stress and yearned for solitude. A couple of my tenants left one of my buildings in disrepair, bills had to be paid, etc. I decided to take this time for solitude, going to my basement, praying before God. Again, when I depend on Him to meet my needs, He shows up, giving me a peace that surpasses understanding. Moreover, I spent a couple of days during the week going for long walks around Prospect Park, focusing on the things of God. A headache lifted and the peace of God came in. This exercise helped to quiet my spirit, knowing that God is in control. Staying before the Lord in solitude made me feel helpless. But I needed to feel helpless, so that I could depend upon the Lord.

### **The Discipline of Service**

In ways of service, I can be a Martha so to speak. This is a strength of mine from the perspective of pure service. John 13: 1-20 is where I draw the meaning and duty to serve. It is a

scripture that I very much embrace and seek to practice. Even taking the subway, I seek opportunities to serve whether it is helping someone up the stairs with a baby carriage, suitcase, etc. In my family and among my relatives, I serve in various capacities, taking my mom on doctor's appointments, helping my cousin with lease agreements, etc. Therefore, in many ways, it is in my DNA. It is definitely one of the gifts that God has given me.

This week my niece needed a babysitter, complaining that the baby father went to live with his mother in another state. Normally, I would be upset and complain about his irresponsible behavior but I counseled her to not complain and pretend he doesn't exist. My niece's back-up should be her father, but he shows no interest in doing that. Therefore, I feel like I am stepping up as a father and grandfather, but I felt a great deal of freedom from God not to resent those who should be helping but are not. Given my personality of exacting fairness in every situation, this is a vast improvement for me. I continue to allow God to remind me that the battle is not mine but the Lord's. Therefore, I am at peace with the current situation of babysitting without holding resentment.

These acts of kindness are not something I talk about boastfully, doing it for self-righteous reasons, but they are hidden services seen by God. If I ever mention it to someone, it is for edification purposes. I believe humility in my life comes from the discipline of service that I show.

# SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES LOG REPORT FORM

ATS.SF503 – Initiation in Spiritual Formation

Date	Spiritual Discipline	How you practiced this discipline (Foster & Helmers' book)	Results
9/14/2020	Meditation	This week, I have been bombarded by many issues and felt a great wrestling in my mind. I took time to meditate on scriptures.	There was a quieting in my spirit. I had to compel myself to just stay before the Lord no matter what. The Lord brought peace to my mind but it is still a struggle to maintain that peace because I am so much of a doer.
10/4/2020	Study	I approach the scripture to ascertain the unadulterated truth concerning the Word of God. Looking at Isa. 7:14, Isa. 9:6, comparing it with Matt. 1:22-23, I find the Deity of Christ.	When I do a deep dive into scriptures, God gives me revelation knowledge. This knowledge illuminates my very spirit, giving me understanding as never before. I then share this knowledge with others where we could all gleam from the light.
10/23/2020	Submission	I allowed someone to violate what I believe I had a right to.	After much prayers and submission to the Lord, I had a peace. The Lord spoke to my heart the battle is not yours but the Lord's.
10/24/2020	Fast/Consecration	I had one meal a day, dinner to dinner, consumed water and tea during the day. I avoid TV during the day for about 4 days.	I felt a greater sensitivity to the move of the Lord. I sensed His presence all around me. There was a calming in my spirit where I am usual anxious and very busy.
10/28/2020	Prayer	I silenced my thoughts and intentionally focused on the Lord, going before Him with praise and worship. I used Psalms 91, reflecting and praying the Scripture.	As I maintained my time before Him, the Lord began to bring to mind those He wanted me to pray for. As I petitioned God, empathy and compassion filled my heart for those I was praying for. Instead of me doing the work for others, I turned it over to the Lord.
10/29/2020	Confession	I spent some time in reflecting upon my attitudes toward others who said destructive things. I	I believe the Lord impressed upon my heart to confess and reflect with Pastor Nestor. He counseled, giving words of

		pleaded with the Lord to increase my capacity to love. I don't have too many people that I can confess what I am feeling. This is something I yearn for.	healing and share some of his family situations as it related to mine.
10/29/2020	Worship	I prayed and played worship songs as I laid before the Lord in adoration. With eyes closed, listening to the words of worship songs, I sought the presence of the Lord.	There is a greater sensitivity of the presence of the Lord. Later during that day after going for a long walk, talking to a trusted individual, the Lord dropped a burden in my heart (feeling empathy) to continue to pray for someone who had a troubled life.
11/3/2020	Solitude	I took a moment from my business schedule to briskly walk around the park for a couple of hours. Then spent time alone in my basement reading.	This was very therapeutic and relaxing considering how stress I was. I felt the peace of God all around me. All the stress and worries in mind evaporated and the peace of God filled that space.
11/07/2020	Service	I offered a way for my niece to work on her job and save babysitting money while taking my mom shopping.	It was an answer to my niece's prayers so she would not lose her job. She was at peace until she could figure the next step to hold the father of her child responsible for child care.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Foster, Richard J., Celebration of Discipline, The Path to Spiritual Growth, Fourth Edition, San Francisco, CA; HarperCollin Publishers, 2018

\*I skipped around the various disciplines according to various opportunities. I hope that is not a problem.