

In terms of my spiritual vitality, I feel my connection with God growing stronger slowly but steadily. I occasionally hear his responses to me through other believers as well. This is through dreams when I am praying about some concerns in my life. Although I am not consistently aware of his presence all the time as of yet, I am certainly more aware of it than four years ago. Through the Lord's blessings, I am experiencing his power and his victory in my life, and experiencing the influence of the Holy spirit.

Moreover, my rhythm of worship on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis is largely determined by the spiritual disciplines I practice. Some of them I practice daily while others I practice only once or twice a year. One example of this is praying. I pray on a daily basis so that I can discern the Lord's voice in my soul and in my heart. Having a relationship with God is the same as having a relationship with a human being in terms of needing to have the necessary component of consistency to maintain the relationship. This is why prayer is one of the most important spiritual disciplines to me from my subjective point of view.

I pray so that I can reflect upon the gracefulness and mercy of the Lord to send his one and only Son to die for our sins. Jesus was very brave to willingly give himself as a sacrifice to perish on the cross for our sins, even when he knew that his physical death was by no means going to be quick and painless. This is because he had to lean on his broken bones to support his body weight for at least six hours until the eventual death of his earthly life. He was very brave to refuse calling upon his reinforcements of angels to come and alleviate his suffering. Jesus Christ was also very brave to perish spiritually as well. This is because when he shouldered all of our sins upon himself, he was alienated from his Father for the first time. This is why he cries out for his Father toward the end of his life; he was vulnerable in that moment. This is the main reason why I pray a prayer of thanksgiving as often as I can, not just on holidays, but daily to

never take for granted the potential gift of eternal salvation Jesus had bestowed upon us through the spilling of his precious blood.

In relevance of a monthly rhythm of worship, I practice the spiritual discipline of service. Christian faith without works is like a dead faith as described in James 2:14-17. In the book called "Celebration of Discipline," by Richard J. Foster, the author explains about service. He states that "Service is not a list of things that we do, though in it we discover things to do. It is not a code of ethics, but a way of living. To do specific acts of service is not the same thing as living in the discipline of service." (Foster 134). In more direct terms, we as believers of Christ should serve others in our community inside and outside of the Church because we want to serve, not because we feel obligated to serve out of duty. There is a stark difference between unwilful and willful service. Some examples of the spiritual discipline of service are doing small things, being courteous, showing hospitality, as well as listening. (Foster 135-138). "Finally, there is the service of sharing the Word of Life with one another." (Foster 139).

This is why whenever I come across a homeless man or woman, I give them ten to twenty dollars for I know that person needs the money more than I do. Whenever my aunt with my cousins come home because she fought with her husband, I receive them with hospitality. I do this despite the fact that their presence makes the house in which I live in uncomfortable because the issue of spacing and the lack of general privacy, as well as extra laundry, food, and dishes to make or wash.

Nevertheless, I found it intriguing how when we are serving people from our own nation, we do not show the same delicacy and politeness to potential believers as we show to foreign individuals in other nations with a different language and culture than ours. Because we speak the same language and share the same culture, we become lax in our approach and sensitivity to

the other individual's space, privacy, and feelings. (Foster 137). This is why Christians lately have been labeled as obnoxious recruiters who only show interest in gaining more members and growing the numbers of their churches rather than caring and wanting to know the individual for who he or she is.

One spiritual discipline I practice weekly is study. In terms of study, it is encouraged by Richard Foster to do it on your own rather than in groups. He states that "Organized group retreats almost never take study seriously so you will probably need to structure the retreat yourself." (Foster 71). What is more is that the author explains the difference between "the study of scripture and the devotional reading of the Scripture." (Foster 59). In the former, the emphasized focus is on the hermeneutics of the biblical scriptures while for the latter the focus is on practical implementation of biblical lessons and morals in one's daily life. (Foster 69).

As Richard J. Foster contends, "When we study a book of the Bible we are seeking to be controlled by the intent of the author. We are determined to hear what he is saying, not what we want him to say. We want life transforming truth, not just good feelings." (Foster 69). Thus, this is why I avoid reading the Book of Psalms and the Book of Proverbs to a degree. Although there are many good lessons to learn from them, they are less directional and more ambiguous in terms of their focus than the Pentateuch.

In terms of a yearly rhythm of worship, I fast on Easter and on Christmas. I fast for the remembrance of Jesus Christ perishing on the cross for all of humanity and also for the remembrance of Jesus resisting the devil for forty days in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1-11. This humbles me and touches me emotionally and spiritually as well as inspires me to be the best I can possibly be as a believer in the Christian faith. As Richard Foster states, "Fasting must

forever center on God. It must be God-initiated and God-ordained.” (Foster 54). Additionally, “More than any other discipline, fasting reveals the things that control us.” (Foster 55).

Additionally, my rule of life that I would like to implement into my life would be the practice of new spiritual disciplines on daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis in order to become more intimate with God and maintain my spiritual vitality. Therefore, I would like to practice meditation daily. Although I have meditated upon the Word of the Lord before, it was not consistent in my day-to-day life. Richard J. Foster describes meditation as having two primary components which are attachment and detachment. (Foster 21). “The detachment from the confusion all around is in order to have a richer attachment to God. Christian meditation leads us to the inner wholeness necessary to give ourselves to God freely.” (Foster 21).

The discipline I would like to practice on a weekly basis would be confession. The most daunting aspect of this spiritual discipline is that it is perceived that a church small group is comprised of sinless and perfect human beings who are holy. (Foster 145). Nevertheless, if we are aware that our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ are just as sinful as us, we are then alleviated from any pressure of being sinless. (Foster 146). We can then become vulnerable in front of others and others will be free to become vulnerable to us as well. (Foster 146). As the author asserts, “Confession begins in sorrow, but it ends in joy. There is celebration in the forgiveness of sins because it results in a genuinely changed life.” (Foster 153). I believe that this will offer me a good support group in terms of maintaining and strengthening my Christian faith through openness and honesty on a consistent basis.

In pertinence to a monthly basis, I would like to practice the spiritual discipline of simplicity. Living a life of minimalism is good for a believer in Christ to be centered on Jesus and it does not cause believers to be overly concerned with materialistic wealth and what others

might think or say about them. (Foster 80). In more direct terms, we should care more about what the Lord thinks of us rather than our earthly reputation with other individuals. (Foster 80). Rather than worrying about the opinions of others or about what tomorrow brings, “if we truly believe that God is who Jesus says he is, then we do not need to be afraid.” (Foster 89). As Richard J. Foster asserts, the primary purpose of the practice of simplicity “is to seek the kingdom of God and the righteousness of his kingdom first and then everything necessary will come in its proper order.” (Foster 86). There is something wonderful concerning the act of simplifying my life for the Lord as this will give me more time to be with him as well as to listen and to speak with him. I will have less temptations and worries which will drive me closer to the Lord than I ever was before.

In finality, in relevance to practicing a discipline on a yearly basis, I would like to apply the discipline of celebration into my life. What is crucial to know is that “Without joyous celebration to infuse the other disciplines, we will sooner or later abandon them. Joy produces energy. Joy makes us strong.” (Foster 191). Richard J. Foster asserts that “One way to practice celebration is through singing, dancing, and shouting.” (Foster 197). Moreover, the new spiritual experiences that I need in order to make my faith and intimacy stronger with the Lord are as previously mentioned. They are being in a small group of trustworthy believers to confess my sins to, having a simplistic life style, practicing meditation, celebrating the disciplines, and being thankful of my blessings to become more joyful and motivated to continue with the spiritual disciplines. Other examples of new spiritual experience which I need is take a solo retreat by myself to get away from world distractions in order to become more intimate with God or attending revival services such as in the Asbury Church located in Wilmore, Kentucky which is having twenty four hour services seven days a week.