

Spiritual Disciplines Paper  
Brian Gaughan  
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### **Meditation**

When I read the Word of God, I want to do more than simply read it. I want to ponder it deeply. So in meditation, I will read over a passage of Scripture several times. The passage may be a chapter, a portion of a chapter, or a few verses. Sometimes I will read the selected portion in multiple English translations and even a Spanish Bible (I am not fluent in Spanish but understand a good amount of what I read.). In doing so, I can ponder the meaning of what I am reading more deeply and consider various angles of what God is saying in His Word. It is amazing how the same concept can be communicated with different words. By meditating on the Word of God, I look to draw closer to God and let His Word permeate my soul with the intention of letting it transform my thinking and my lifestyle. While I certainly do read through books of the Bible and longer passages of Scripture, meditation is and has been a regular practice in my daily life for many years.

### **Prayer**

In prayer I converse with God about anything and everything on my heart as I desire to be in accord with His will. For decades I have followed the A.C.T.S. pattern of prayer - Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. With adoration I praise and worship the Lord (worship will be elaborated on in another section). With confession I honestly admit all of my sins, failures, mistakes, shortcomings, temptations and struggles to God. With thanksgiving I specifically thank the Lord for His many abundant blessings in my life. With supplication, I bring all of my concerns to the Lord for others and myself. I pray for my family and all of our

needs. I pray for the needs of others. I pray for the salvation of lost people, the sanctification of believers, for pastors, local churches, missionaries, home & international missions, etc.

But I also take time to be still and listen to God. This class has reminded me of the importance of stillness.

I pray alone as well as with others. This semester, in January, my church had 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, so this involved several prayer gatherings I was able to participate in.

### **Study**

For me, study may involve studying directly upon a passage of Scripture or it may involve studying Scriptural concepts in books about the Bible, Christian living, theology and social issues. When I prepare sermons and Bible studies, I spend time reading study Bibles, commentaries and online study resources. As a seminary student, I am constantly reading books on theology, Biblical studies, Christian living and social issues. One of the things I like to do that helps study be more of a spiritual discipline is to listen to worship music, classical music or jazz while studying. This often helps me to focus and allows what I read to digest into my mind and spirit, so that studying isn't a mere academic dry exercise but truly a spiritual discipline.

### **Solitude**

In times of solitude I get alone with God and have peace and quiet to draw closer to God, clear my mind, recalibrate my focus, make decisions, calm down, reduce stress, etc. Where the solitude takes place will vary. It could be alone in my bedroom, dining room or patio. It could be while taking a walk around my neighborhood (a quiet residential neighborhood). It can also be on a nature trail or a park. This gives me the quiet I need to pour out my heart to God with privacy and minimized distractions.

## **Service**

In service, I am transferring the spiritual experiences described above into tangible, practical acts that honor God and bless others. In this semester, my main service is leading a Bible study online for fellow Alliance University students. I also preached at a funeral. At other times, service for me may be preaching in Sunday morning worship services, participating in community outreaches that meet people's needs, leading prayer meetings, etc. Service is a spiritual discipline because I need to enter these activities in a mindset of prayer, committing it to the Lord, praying for the people to whom I'll be ministering and entrusting the fruit to God.

## **Confession**

I believe very strongly in the value of confession, first and foremost to God but then also to trusted friends who are accountability partners. I keep short accounts with the Lord, which means that I confess my sins daily. I don't like for an extended period of time to go by to get right with God. Once I realize I am out of alignment with God, have offended someone and need to repent, apologize and make amends, I go ahead and do so. I take time in prayer to confess my sins to God. When I talk with accountability partner friends I then share my sins with them and pray together. Confessing sin to God causes me to be forgiven and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Confessing sin to accountability partners helps me to gain freedom, receive correction and guidance. Making apologies to people I have offended causes me to take responsibility for my actions and experience reconciliation with them. Whether it's a confession to an accountability partner or an apology to someone I have offended, there is a humbling that takes place when I have to admit what I have done wrong to another human being. Although I know God hears my prayers, I cannot see Him. But I can see other humans and talking to them about my sin helps me to come face to face with where I've gone wrong and how I need to change.

## **Worship**

I practice the spiritual discipline of worship alone daily and with others weekly. For worshipping alone, I listen to and sing along with multiple worship songs found on YouTube from Maverick City Music, Elevation Worship, Hillsong, Chris Tomlin, Israel Houghton and many others. In fact, as I write this paper I have worship music playing on my headphones. I incorporate worship music into my personal quiet time in the morning, while sitting still in devotion to God. But I often continue to listen to worship music while getting ready in the mornings, driving my car, doing chores around my home (laundry & dishes), etc. That is how I “practice the presence of God” as I learned from the book “The Practice of the Presence of God” by Brother Lawrence, many years ago. In so doing, I am setting my heart and mind on the Lord and His purposes. In gathering with others in worship services, we are encouraging one another’s faith by joining our voices together in praise to God.

## **Fasting**

With fasting (from food or various activities) I am able to recenter my attention on God. It is actually quite fascinating to see how fasting helps me to receive clarity, receive direction from the Lord, and regain focus and strength. At the beginning of the semester, in January, I participated in 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting with my church. I experienced great renewal and also healing from a recent hurtful situation.

## **Guidance**

I believe very strongly in the value of giving and receiving spiritual guidance. Until reading a Celebration of Discipline, I wasn’t aware of it being a spiritual discipline, but having read the chapter on Guidance I now understand that it is one. While this is a spiritual discipline I have practiced for many years, I have practiced it in this semester and previous months prior, as I

have been walking through a challenging life situation. God has used various mentors to speak into my life words of wisdom, direction and encouragement to help me navigate my way through that situation.

### **Silent Retreats**

On the 2 Silent Retreats this semester, I placed special attention on prayer, meditation and solitude. Due to the abundance of time alone that I had, I was able to spend longer than usual amounts of time seeking the Lord and meditating on His Word, as well as the spiritual truths found in the 2 books we needed to read on the silent retreats. I was alone in an AirBNB private room and outdoors at a nature center and county park and had plenty of opportunity for solitude. It was a wonderful opportunity to draw closer to the Lord and focus my thoughts on Him.

Spiritual Disciplines Log Report Form			ATS SF.503 Initiation in Spiritual Formation
Date	Spiritual Discipline	How You Practiced This Discipline	Results
Daily	Meditation	Reading over Scripture passages several times	Digesting God's Word
Daily	Prayer	Setting aside time to communicate with God	Staying close to God
Daily	Study	Reading seminary books, preparing Bible studies and sermon	Learning and growth
2/17, 2/18, 3/17, 3/18	Solitude	Private room at AirBNB, nature trails, parks	Peace and focus
Sunday nights	Service	Leading a Bible study, preaching at a funeral	Blessing other people
Daily	Confession	Telling God and accountability partners my sins	Getting right with God
Daily & each Sunday	Worship	Listening to worship music and being in worship services	Being filled with the Holy Spirit
A few weeks in January	Fasting	Church wide 21 days of prayer & fasting - food & social media, prayer mtgs	Clarity and focus
Weekly	Guidance	Meeting with mentors	Navigating through challenging circumstances

