

Ariana Waters

SF 503

Spring 2023

The nine disciplines I participated in this semester are fasting, prayer, solitude, confession, worship, guidance, celebration, service, and meditation. The most difficult of these for me to participate in is confession and guidance. I feel stubborn and strong-willed as I sat down to pray through the Psalm 23 repeatedly. I chose different versions to re-write by hand to help me meditate on the truth of what was being said about God. Through that practice of daily prayer, it led me into confession as I realized I didn't trust God like I thought I did. I was afraid to come near to him for fear of being hit. The image that came to mind as I thought about God as shepherd was being afraid of animal abuse and being a little dog sneaking up to see if I could nudge the Father's hand without being hit. This really surprised me. I fancy myself strong but deep inside is a very scared little girl.

The next discipline I practiced most frequently is fasting. I love fasting. I could do it again and again. There is a clarity and peace that comes as I can deny myself of something so dear to me (food, Netflix, Instagram) to feast on the dearest thing: Christ himself. I want to focus more on this as I felt like God was initiating a conversation with me on my reliance on material things. I am sure this would lend itself to practicing the discipline of simplicity too. I stumbled into this discipline and then intentionally chose to press in. What I mean is, I wasn't planning on the frequency or the quick start but a board member from my church texted me the third week of January to start a zoom meet-up for our church plant on Wednesday mornings. He suggested the board and leaders open a weekly space to fast breakfast and pray for 30 min before the start of the day. That weekend I was to preach on the Holy Spirit and everyday Living Water.

For the next 5 days until I preached, I continued to wake up and sense the Lord asking me for more. It was like God was asking me “How hungry for my Spirit are you?” “How hungry for a fresh revelation?” “How hungry for breakthrough for the people you lead?” I got to answer in surrendering each meal and choosing hot tea and water. Then at some point in the afternoons or evenings He would release me to a meal. It was the most amazing thing. Even more so amazing was the freedom I was getting. I had been struggling for a year with sermon writing. It got to the point that I was dreading having to write and preach. The fasting revealed it to me, there were comparison issues, trust issues, and bitterness. I got to go to my intercessors the Thursday January 27th and confess. They spent a few hours with me praying and listening. It was a deep spiritual work in my soul but also, I had releasing of pain in my neck and shoulders.

Confession was painful and nerve-wracking. I confessed in a small group setting to my pastor about the pain and bitterness I was carrying. It led to helpful conversations over the next 3 weeks as we navigated where that was coming from. He asked me to share candidly, and he listened. It also led to his confessions about his shortcomings as a leader. This led to breakthrough in our church the following weekend. God chose to move after we surrendered and confessed.

For prayer, it was both an inward discipline throughout my days but also a regular discipline in community. I kept having fruitful times of prayer with my triad Christina and Faith. We began in the first few classes by listening for a word, image, or song for each other whatever God would speak. Then we began to share more of our lives with each other and it leant itself to deeper and deeper prayer for each other. I have especially loved how the prayer has “spilled” out of our classroom settings and onto the trains. As we commute home from class, I have had more than one time of prayer with Christina. It is as if the 4 or 5 train uptown after class on Tuesdays

is actually our prayer room. I saw God answer their prayers for me for restoration with my car. We prayed that God would forgive me for my foolish purchase above my means of a bad car. Then we prayed for God to cover the bill and help me find freedom from that restraint. We prayed that for a few weeks, just last week a mentor of mine and her husband wired \$13,500 the exact balance to the dollar to me and my husband. We paid the car off and now we can sell it. This is a miracle of God from prayer. We intend to pay the couple back now and God is providing means for us to be restored financially from the losses this car's issues caused. This can do nothing but lead me to celebration and worship.

For the discipline of service, I decided to ask friends and strangers how I could help them without gain for myself. Finally, I had a friend who said she could use help moving. I took the day off work and volunteered to drive the U-Haul that she was afraid to navigate through the NYC streets. It truly was God providing because I realized I have so much experience of driving large trucks in the southeast and it was causing her so much worry to think she would be doing it alone.

The day was filled with walking up and down stairs carrying each item safely into its new place. There were many times my legs and arms ached, but I prayed for the Lord to help me. Being with Tondri for her moving day was like a sabbath for my mind. I told her about Rabbi Heschel's quote on sabbath. She has invited me back to come and bless her new home with oil and prayer. I truly believe I need to add service more into my rule of life.

Spiritual Disciplines Log Report Form

ATS SF.503 Initiation
in Spiritual Formation

Date	Spiritual Discipline	How You Practiced This Discipline	Results
<p>1/25/23, 2/1/23 2/8/23, 2/15/23 2/22/23,3/1/23 3/8/23, 3/22/23 3/29/23</p>	<p>Fasting</p>	<p>I choose to abstain from breakfast until lunchtime and to engage in a small prayer meeting with my pastor and 2 board members each Wednesday. They also fasted with me (when they remembered).</p>	<p>I experienced breakthrough around my attachments to food and around bitterness. I became aware of many of the “Self” sins in my life because of the fasting (self-reliance, self-loathing, self-hatred, and more). I want to continue to implement this as a rhythm.</p>
<p>3/11/2023, 3/10/2023</p>	<p>Prayer (at silent retreat)</p>	<p>I began in a quiet place with my journal. I picked a psalm, Psalm 23. I rewrote the Psalm by hand and then prayed out of that psalm back to God. I also did Psalm 20.</p>	<p>I realized I wrote in my prayer journal next to Psalm 23 – “I am actually afraid to consider God my shepherd most days because I feel like an abused cat or dog sneaking up to lick the hand of God afraid I will be smacked.” (That hurt!!) As I re-read this prayer I realized, I ask the Lord to help me understand that the rod & staff were not used to abuse sheep but to protect and guide.</p>
<p>2/3/2023</p>	<p>Solitude (at silent retreat)</p>	<p>Day of Silence and Solitude in Miami on</p>	<p>I need more. It was incredibly difficult to</p>

		<p>the beach (note to self-pick a quieter place next time)</p>	<p>be alone because I was so afraid of being harmed and not having protection from my community. I didn't want to travel somewhere alone, etc. I am processing this with my counselor there is still much unresolved pain from a trauma in college though it is almost 10 years ago now it feels like it is still happening or has just happened yesterday or today many days. This made solitude especially difficult for me.</p>
<p>1/29/2023 , 1/27/2023</p>	<p>Confession</p>	<p>I had two times of confession that I recorded. The first one preceded the second one, both were unplanned. I confessed my fear and sin of bitterness and judgement towards my pastor and my father (separate people).</p>	<p>I learned that I have a lot of anger which might be fear, pain, and grief under the surface. Even though, I did a grief journal last fall. I hardly scratched the surface of the pain I have inside this can lead me to quickly begin building cases up in the court of my mind and heart. Regular confession to God and others with help me in not being overcome by my resentment but actually releasing it</p>

			and experiencing freedom. I don't have the date but it was sometime in February I also confessed to my husband about personal things.
<p>2/24/2023</p> <p>Every Sunday this semester except</p> <p>3/26/2023</p> <p>3/14.15.16/2023</p> <p>3/29/2023</p>	Worship (at silent retreat)	<p>2/24- A new and odd stretching experience for me a worship night in my friend Rachel's apartment with her 3 roommates, a student I lead, my husband and her boyfriend. They had printed a liturgy. They served us snacks and wine. Then we spent 2 hours in worship through liturgy and corporate song and prayer.</p>	<p>I learned that I had a difficult time entering worship through liturgy and song I did not know. I felt nervous and worried about the repetition of words because I grew up Pentecostal and we didn't do it in that way. I found this refreshing though when they gathered around us in the midst of the liturgies to personally lay hands and intercede for each believer. I felt the Presence of God in that room and among us so thick and heavy I could just weep. I am excited to go back to their apartment this Friday the 31st for the same thirst that is in me to experience the Presence in the body of believers. It felt extra special that we were all from different churches in the city but we were unified in</p>

			Christ.
3/14,15,16/2023	Guidance	Greek Staff Conference corporate guidance and prayer on conferencing.	We got to see what each other had put down on sticky notes and discern next steps as a team. It lead to a time of deep weeping and calling out for God for the grief of the last 3 years in college ministry. We situated our time in Acts 4. I specifically felt release in my life and a renewed sense of calling for the work even as I said goodbye to other staff members who were moving into new careers.
3/16/2023	Celebration	I attended a banquet for staff at my ministry Greek InterVarsity where we got to call out the beauty of God in our midst and in each other. We had good food, drinks, and quality time of celebrating God's work together. We even spent time thanking God for each student by name who had followed Jesus this semester.	This was hard for me. It was hard for me to experience being celebrated. I realized I have such low self-regard. I need to see God restore my image of self and respect for self this year. I was so grateful to be celebrated for my character but inside I felt I wanted to believe it.
3/1/23	Service	I chose to take off a day of work and to help my friend move. I	I saw God deepen my hunger for service in my neighborhood and

		drove the truck, I lugged items up and down a 4 th and 5 th floor walk-up apartment.	in my friendships. I realized how much I set up my life to serve me. It was very convicting.
Almost Daily (I tried) give or take a few days. Bi-weekly “Guyon Prayer” too.	Meditation (using lectio 365)	I used the guided Lectio Divina meditations from Lectio 365 in the morning and evening. I was most consistent with the evening ones because they were more silence after the prompt and also help me to settle into sleep.	I find it is difficult to stop thinking about everything else and focus on God. I notice when I skip this now. My whole day and night feel like they are missing something.