

An Outline of the Disciplines

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To my Reader

This booklet is the companion to a sermon series I preached at Highlands Presbyterian Church of LaFayette, Georgia during Lent, 2006. This booklet is not intended to stand alone, though as an outline some might find it helpful. It is intended to be an aid for those who have listened to the sermon series and wish to keep pressing into the disciplines. I would encourage anyone who wishes to seek growth in the disciplines to read some of the excellent books on the subject, several of which are listed in the “Further Reading” at the end of each outline.

The spiritual disciplines are by definition something that we *practice*. We grow in the disciplines much as we grow in anything else. A carpenter might read about techniques in carpentry, but it is only by practice that he truly grows in his craft. He spends the majority of his time doing carpentry, while he may turn to a book for direction or inspiration or help with a problem. The disciplines are like that. My hope and prayer is that you will seek God in the disciplines as something that you practice, and that God, by his grace, will bring you to greater maturity and make you more into the image of Jesus Christ.

Travis D. Hutchinson
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Sermon One
Salvation and Your Body
1 Corinthians 15:20-34

Introduction to Discipleship and Disciplines

All Christians are called not only to believe in Jesus, but also follow him. Mt 16:24; 1 Pe 2:21; 1 Co 11:1; He 13:7.

Following Jesus is more than subscribing to a system of doctrine. We are not saved by bare knowledge. We are not changed by knowledge if we don't have faith. Knowledge by itself is dangerous. 1 Co 8:1

Following Jesus is more than knowledge plus trust and good feelings. Faith without works is a "dead faith." Ja 2:26 People who have no works are not saved. Ma 7:24-27 (This doesn't mean that our works save us, but that anyone who is saved will have good works.)

Following Jesus is about being a learner or apprentice. The word "disciple" in the Bible refers to an apprentice. Jesus as our Savior took our sin and bore it on the cross. 2 Co 5:21 Jesus our Savior was righteous in our place. 1 Co 1:30 Jesus our Lord gave us an example to follow. Jn 13:15; 1 Pe 2:21; Ph 3:17.

The problem with WWJD is that we try to get into Jesus' head instead of following his example. Jesus and many others in Scripture practice spiritual disciplines. In fact, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7) is largely about the disciplines.

Why does Jesus have us do these things?

- 1) We are not just spirits with bodies to throw away.
- 2) Our bodies are included in our salvation. 1 Co 15:42-49
- 3) God doesn't just save our souls, but our whole selves.
- 4) Sin doesn't just effect our bodies but our souls.
- 5) Disciplines, performed with our bodies, are means of grace.
- 6) Our bodies, used in obedience to God, are instruments of salvation.

"The body is a help to the soul that loves God, even when it is ill, even when it is dead, and all the more when it is raised again from the dead: for illness is an aid to penitence; death is the gate of rest; and the resurrection will bring consummation. So, rightly, the soul would not be perfected without the body, since she recognizes that in every condition it has been needful to her good."

Bernard of Clairvaux

Further reading: *Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard; *On Loving God*, Bernard of Clairvaux.

Sermon Two
The Discipline of Prayer
Matthew 6:5-13

Spiritual Disciplines: Prayer

What is prayer?

- 1) Prayer is talking to God.
- 2) Prayer is one of the indispensable ways which we grow closer to God.
- 3) Prayer is how we bring God's power to bear in this life and world.

Why do we pray if God knows what we are thinking?

- 1) He tells us to. Ro 12:12
- 2) He desires a relationship with us.
- 3) He sometimes waits to answer a prayer until we ask him. Ja 4:2

Why do we pray if God knows the (predetermined) future?

- 1) He has decreed that we will be his instruments.
- 2) God didn't need Elijah to make it stop or start raining. Ja 5
- 3) He has decreed he will save people and impact the world through you.

We pray because...

- 1) We want to know him and talk to him.
- 2) Our prayer is part of our worship.
- 3) Prayer is our means of calling in support for the battle.

How do we pray?

- 1) It is more like talking than speaking poetry.
 - a) We do talk to him with respect.
 - b) The better we know him the greater we see he is.
 - c) The heart is more important than the lips.
 - d) With humility. Ro 8:27
 - i) Don't try to impress God.
 - ii) Don't try to impress others. Ma 6:5
 - iii) Repent of your sin. Ps 66:18
 - e) Babbling is offensive to God. Mt 6:7
 - f) Secret prayer helps us learn to pray publicly.
- 2) Physical position in prayer does matter.
 - a) In Ancient times it was normal to stand before kings.
 - b) We pray with hands raised. Ps 141:2; 1 Ti 2:8
 - c) We pray with head bowed. Ps 35:13
 - d) It is ok to pray while driving, but there is a problem if that is the only time you pray.
- 3) Regularity does matter.
 - a) Pray in the morning. Ps 88:13

- b) Daniel prayed three times a day. Dn 6:10
- c) We can only pray in the name of Jesus. Jn 16:24
 - i) God is only our father if we are adopted through Jesus.
 - ii) We are only acceptable through Jesus. Ro 3:22; 1 Jo 2:2
- d) We pray only in a deep sense of sinfulness and need.
 - i) God is not our assistant, but our only hope. Ps 124
 - ii) The parable of the two men in prayer. Luke 18
- e) We pray believing God will give us what we need.
 - i) Ma 7:11
- f) We pray believing that God will answer our particular prayer.
 - i) Ma 21:22; Mk 11:24

How do we pray? Using the Lord's Prayer as a model.

- 1) Pray for God's name to be hallowed.
 - a) That people would repent.
 - b) That the Church would be pure.
 - c) That the world would worship God.
- 2) Pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God.
 - a) Pray for workers to come into the harvest. Lk 10:2
 - b) Pray that the Word may speed ahead. 2 Th 3:1
- 3) Pray for our basic needs.
 - a) God knows our needs. Mt 6:8
 - b) God is a good father. Mt 7:11
- 4) Pray for forgiveness of our sins.
 - a) We only receive forgiveness if we forgive. Mk 11:25
- 5) Pray for deliverance from sin and Satan. Mt 26:41
 - a) When we pray for a believer to repent, it is always effective.
 - 1 Jo 5:16

Further reading: *Prayer*, John Bunyan; John Calvin on Prayer (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 3, chapter 20).

An Appendix on Prayer

Notes on Prayer from Scripture

1. David prayed with head bowed on his chest. Ps 35:13
2. Psalmist prays in the morning. 88:13
3. Prays in affliction while faint. 102:1
4. Prayer for the peace of Jerusalem. 122:6
5. Prayer with hands raised. 141:2; 1 Tim 2:8
6. Prayer must be done in righteousness. Prv 15:8; 29; 28:9
7. Daniel prayed three times a day. Dan 6:10
8. Daniel's normal pattern of prayer was with confession for his and his people's sin. 9:20
9. Jonah prayed in the belly of the fish. 2:1
10. We will receive whatever we ask for in faith. Matt 21:22; Mark 11:24
11. Jesus would often pray all night. Luke 6:12
12. Pray and not lose heart. Luke 18:1ff
13. Pray out of sense of unrighteousness. Luke 18:10
14. The Spirit helps our weakness by interceding for us. Rom 8:26
15. Be constant in prayer. Rom 12:12
16. We must pray with our minds. 1 Cor 14:15
17. Pray in the Spirit. Eph 6:18, Jude 20
18. Prayer is the substitute for worry. Philip 4:6
19. Pray without ceasing. 2 The 5:17
20. Food is made holy by the word and prayer. 1 Tim 4:5
21. Prayer by elders for healing. Ja 5:14
22. Effectual prayer for sinning brothers. 1 John 5:16

Notable Examples of Prayer from Scripture

1. Abraham prayed for Abimelech, who had sinned against him, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and slaves. Gen 20:17
2. Isaac prayed for Rebekah and she conceived. Gen 25:21
3. Moses prayed for his people, who had sinned against the Lord, and the Lord ceased punishing them. Num 11:2
4. Moses prayed again for the people and God ceased punishing them. This is the serpent incident. Num 21:7
5. Moses prayed for forgiveness for his people and for Aaron. Deu 9:20, 26
6. Hannah prayed for a child in deep distress and bitter tears. 1 Sam 1:10
7. Hannah prayed in worship and thankfulness. 1 Sam 2:1
8. Solomon prays the dedication to the Temple. 1 Ki 8:28
9. Elisha prayed for his servant to see the army of God. 2 Ki 6:17
10. Hezekiah prayed for deliverance from Assyria and Judah was delivered. 2 Ki 19:15
11. Hezekiah prayed for healing and was healed. 2 Ki 20:2
12. Manassah prayed for forgiveness and obtained it. 2 Chr 33:13
13. Ezra prayed and made confession for the sins of the people. Ez 10:1
14. Nehemiah prayed that the king would let him help Jerusalem. Neh. 2:4
15. God tells Job's friends to have him pray for them. Job 42:8
16. Jesus prayed in submission to his father. Matt 26:39; Mark 14:35
17. Jesus prayed in agony in Garden. Luke 22:44
18. Zechariah is heard and given a son. Luke 1:13
19. Anna the prophetess prayed for sixty years. Luke 2:37
20. The transfiguration occurred during a night of prayer. Luke 9:28
21. Jesus prays for all believers. John 17:9
22. The first Christians devoted themselves to prayer. Acts 1:14
23. They prayed before choosing Mattathias. Acts 1:24
24. Elders committed to prayer and ministry of Word. Acts 6:4
25. Apostles pray that believers might receive Holy Spirit. Acts 8:14
26. Peter prays to raise Tabitha from dead. Acts 9:40
27. Peter sees vision dealing with Gentiles in prayer. Acts 10
28. Peter was prayed out of prison. Acts 12:6
29. Paul and Barnabas prayed out into the mission field. Acts 13:3
30. Paul and Barnabas prayed and fasted when appointing elders. Acts 14:23
31. Paul and Silas were busted out of prison while praying and worshipping. Acts 16:25
32. Paul prayed when leaving the Ephesians elders. Acts 20:36
33. Paul received a trance-vision while praying in the Temple. Acts 22:17

Sermon Three
Study vs. Soaking
Psalm 119:145-152

Spiritual Disciplines: Study and Meditation

The Psalmist...

Has confidence in God's Word, it's truth and power. v.151
Has confidence that God will save him. v.145
Prays on the basis of God's Word twice a day.
Has hope that is found in God's Word.
Meditates on the promise in God's Word.

The Nature of God's Word

- 1) God's word tells us what creation cannot; nature can only make us accountable. Rom 1; Ps 19
- 2) God's word is what brings us to salvation. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ." Rom 10:17
- 3) God's word is what equips us for the Christian life. 2 Tim 3:16-17
- 4) God's word gives us strength. Man lives by "every word which comes from the mouth of God." Matt 4:4; Deut 8:3 "I have food to eat you know nothing about" John 4
- 5) God's word brings us to victory over sin. "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word and by hiding your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you." Ps 119:9, 11
- 6) God's word is what comforts us and gives us hope. Romans 15:4 "What was written before...that we might have hope."
- 7) God's word gives us direction and guidance. Ps 119:105
- 8) God's word is our offensive weapon against the evil one. Eph 6:17

Our Problems Making Use of God's Word

- 1) We get most Bible exposure from worship services.
- 2) When we do read privately, we read randomly.
- 3) We read inconsistently, a little here, a little there.
- 4) We are spiritually lazy.
- 5) We need instruction as to how to study God's Word.

How to Study God's Word

- 1) Establish a regular pattern: Daily. "Whatever keeps me from my Bible is my enemy, however harmless it may appear to be." A. W. Tozer
- 2) Go to the Bible with prayer and faith. Pray before reading.
- 3) Start with the Gospels, then Acts. Pick a few of the New Testament letters to study. When you move to the Old Testament, start with the historical books, in this order: Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, Ruth,

Samuel 1, 2; Kings 1, 2; Ezra, Nehemiah. Meanwhile go to Psalms for prayer and worship and Proverbs for wisdom.

- 4) Get a handle on the book before you move on. Read slowly. Don't race. It is better to know one book well than have a surface understanding of many.
- 5) Understand Scripture is generally clear; God doesn't hide meanings. If you can't figure it out, it might be clearer with more reading elsewhere or might be a mystery.
- 6) Context is everything. Read whole passages and books. Cults take passages out of context.
- 7) The Bible explains itself. Therefore the Bible is your most important tool for study. Serious study should be with a fairly literal Bible, such as the ESV or the NAS or the NKJV.
- 8) Besides the Bible, there are a few very helpful tools: A full concordance, a Bible dictionary, a Bible handbook, and a Bible Atlas. The concordance is a tool for finding Bible verses and following words through the Bible for study. For instance, a concordance will show you every instance of the word "forgive" in your English Bible. You have to get a concordance which matches your translation. We have one for the ESV. A Bible dictionary allows you to look up articles on different topics in your Bible. You can read an article on the Philistines or on Hebrew weapons. Some Bible dictionaries are liberal in orientation and don't take the position that the Bible is inerrant and infallible. Others are so old that they don't really represent modern scholarship, so they are sometimes of more limited use. A Bible handbook introduces the Bible more generally and gives an overview of the content. The same cautions apply as above. We sell an inexpensive ESV Bible handbook. Bible atlases have maps of biblical locations at different points in history. This often helps clear up stories where the geography is confusing. The Moody Bible Atlas is excellent. Older atlases are often fine.

Christian Meditation

*"Study is analyzing the water and meditation is getting in.
The longer you soak, the cleaner you become."* Travis

What is Christian meditation?

- 1) "Eastern meditation is emptying the mind. Christian meditation is filling it."
Richard Foster
- 2) Stopping to listen to God speaking today through his Word (not just what he said way back). *Lectio Divina*, divine listening.
- 3) Mueller: Not letting Scripture flow through our minds as water through a pipe. "Considering what we read, pondering it, applying it to our hearts."
- 4) Not just reading, but entering into Scripture. Seeing it from the inside.
- 5) "Withdraw into silence where we prayerfully and steadily focus on Scripture." Dallas Willard

How do we meditate?

- 1) Take a portion of your time for reading and give it over to meditation. Take the amount of time you have for reading Scripture and figure out how many chapters you can read in the allotted time. Then take the same amount of time and read only half as much Scripture, giving yourself time to consider what you have read.
- 2) Be at a place and time where you can be undisturbed. No TV, radio or phone. Jesus often went off to be alone.
- 3) Slow down. We must cultivate holy leisure. “Our rushing reflects our internal state and our internal state needs to be transformed.” Richard Foster
- 4) As you read, enter into the story. Be there. Imagine you are in the church hearing Paul’s letter read for the first time. Imagine that you are there seeing Jesus do these things. Try to place yourself in the shoes of all the different groups of people. First imagine you are a simple person, then a Pharisee. How would you “hear” the text differently?
- 5) Read the passage thinking about your life or think about your life after reading with Bible open.
- 6) Ask yourself what promise God is asking you to believe. Respond by praying on the basis of the passage.
- 7) Allow time for God to press things into your heart.

Further Reading: *A Sacred Sorrow*, Michael Card; *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster.

Sermon Four
Shhh! God away!
Matthew 14:13

Spiritual Disciplines: Solitude and Silence

There is a conviction that most of us have that adversity and suffering cannot possibly be God's will for us, and so we avoid things that are difficult (especially relational and spiritual things). This is part of the reason why so many people divorce and why young people struggle with their parents.

"Wives submit to your husbands." This is not usually easy, because you know more than most people what a sinner he is. "Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church," giving up your petty wants for her needs, fighting your selfishness and giving up your "rights." Children obey your parents." Even when you want to go your own way and your parents genuinely don't get it.

The disciplines of the Christian life are like that. Tough, but not grimly depressing, but difficult and increasingly joyful. Much like an athlete who begins to work and then begins to win.

Monks compared this to being on a ladder. As we submit to God in the disciplines, we climb the rungs. Esther de Waal, a Welsh grandmother who writes books about St. Benedict, writes: "The top of the ladder carries a promise of the serenity that comes with my discovery that God is in charge of my life and that as a result I am truly free."

Loneliness vs. Solitude

- 1) "Loneliness is inner emptiness. Solitude is inner fulfillment." Foster
- 2) Loneliness can happen in a crowd or your own home. Solitude almost always happens when we choose to be alone.
- 3) Loneliness is something we hate and try to escape. Solitude is something we choose.
- 4) Loneliness wears us down. Solitude strengthens us.

Jesus and Solitude

- 1) Jesus was alone for 40 days in the desert preparing to fight Satan.
- 2) Jesus withdrew to solitude to grieve the death of his cousin, John.
- 3) Jesus sought to be alone to prepare for the cross.

Solitude and Meditation

- 1) Meditation, allowing God to speak to us in his Word, happens when we are alone.
- 2) Meditation only happens when we stop talking.
- 3) Silence is one of the ways in which God trains our tongues. Ja 1:24; Pr 21:33
- 4) It is wrong for us to always be talking in our time with God. Zc 2:13
- 5) With God we should listen first.

Solitude and the Modern Life

- 1) Everything in our modern lives wars against solitude: TV, radio, telephone, children, tasks.
- 2) Meditation and solitude must become “big rocks,” the things we schedule first. Stephen Covey illustration.
- 3) Take a parcel of time from every day. a) Read Scripture slowly, b) Be somewhere where you will not be interrupted, c) Think of the best time to do this, d) Doing this will teach others (children, co-workers, etc.) what your real priorities are.
- 4) Take regular mini-retreats. Take a day or overnight in a park or retreat center. Do some planning. Seek some direction with this.
- 5) Plan your life so that you can take a weekend or longer every year.

Solitude and Salvation

The disciplines of solitude and silence reveal that we cannot save ourselves

- 1) Mark 10:24 “How difficult it is to enter the Kingdom of God!” Before we come to Jesus, we are slaves to sin. Afterwards we still struggle with sin.
- 2) Solitude and silence magnify our sinfulness and thereby magnify our need for Jesus.
- 3) Only when we are quiet do the stuffed things rise up in our hearts.
- 4) Only when we stop and listen do we hear God speak to us in his word (we read w/o listening).
- 5) The turmoil of our hearts reveals our lack of peace and constant need for Jesus.
- 6) The fact that this is so difficult and we resist it reveals our need.

Desperation and Sin

Our sin (separation from and enmity with God) can never be remedied by our own efforts

- 1) Eph 2:8 “by grace you have been saved through faith...it is the gift of God.”
- 2) Our sin has separated us from God and we cannot fix it: good works, religiosity.
- 3) The best we can do is fool people who don’t know us very well.
- 4) God’s justice is bearing down on us, the wrath of God is NOW revealed (Ro 1), God won’t pardon sinners (outside of Jesus).
- 5) Our only hope comes to us if God offers us a relationship with himself that he himself creates.
- 6) He’s done this in the sacrificial death of Christ, the power of the resurrection, sending of HS. 1 Pe 3:18 “Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...”
- 7) We don’t earn it; he gives it to us as sinners. Ro 5:8 “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

Further reading: Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict*; Dallas Willard, *Spirit of the Disciplines*; Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*.

Sermon Five
Hunger for God
Matthew 6:16-18

Spiritual Disciplines: Fasting

What is fasting? Denying ourselves food in order to experience closer communion with God. In the Spiritual Disciplines we abstain from things that are not bad in themselves.

Is Fasting Normal?

- 1) Fasting is normal in the history of the Christian church from the days of the apostles until the mid 1800's.
- 2) Jesus seems to assume that his disciples will fast by saying "When you fast..." Mt 6:16
- 3) Jesus says that his disciples will fast after his ascension. Mt 9:14ff
- 4) We see that in Acts the church fasts. Acts 13

How is fasting done?

- 1) Abstaining only from rich foods. Daniel 1:12; 10:3
- 2) Abstaining from food but drinking water. Mt 4:2
- 3) Abstaining from food and water. Dt 9:9
- 4) Abstaining from food but drinking juice or protein (not biblical, but common).

What are the benefits of fasting?

- 1) This discipline teaches us a lot about ourselves very quickly. Dallas Willard.
- 2) Fasting reveals the things that control us. Richard Foster
- 3) We learn that we use food for comfort, amusement, self-reward and relief from suffering. In this way, food is an idol, because we get from food what we should seek from God.
- 4) It teaches us that we should go to God with those needs. We abstain from food to feast on God. Pp 3:19; 1 Co 6:13
- 5) We learn that we do not have to fulfill every bodily desire. Richard Foster
- 6) It teaches us how to suffer. Teaches us how to "pick up our cross and follow" Jesus. Soldiers learn how to handle suffering in battle by suffering in training.
- 7) It teaches us that suffering isn't just something that happens to us, but that it is something we embrace.

How do we do it?

- 1) Not with any fanfare. Mt 6
- 2) Focusing on God. This takes much practice, because we are hungry.
- 3) Regularly, because all disciplines take much practice to do well.

- 4) If you have blood sugar or heart problems, talk to your doctor first.
- 5) Start with a 24-hour fast. Then try a three-day fast. Break fasts with light meals.
- 6) Talk to doctor and a spiritual director (mentor) before starting longer fasts.
- 7) We only think we've been hungry. For first three days hunger is only from the habit of eating. Our stomachs are unruly children. Real hunger sets in between 3 to 7 days. Starvation begins between 21 to 40 days. We can only live without water for three days (without divine intervention).
- 8) If you have an eating disorder, never fast without a spiritual director. You can fast with plain food or with non-food things.

Fasting is about finding our satisfaction in God, not in food.

Further reading: *Hunger for God*, John Piper; *Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard; *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster.

Sermon Six
Service, Sacrifice, and Secrecy
Matthew 6:1-5

Spiritual Disciplines: Service, Secrecy and Sacrifice

When the Bible speaks of reward, what kind of reward is it talking about?

Material blessings – Mal 3:10

Heavenly blessings – Mt 5:12; 1 Co 3:14

Earthly spiritual blessings – Philip 2:13

The Sermon on the Mount is concerned with the last two.

In heaven, there are levels of reward, just as in hell there are degrees of punishments. Lk 12:47-48

In heaven, everyone's cup is filled to overflowing, but some cups are larger than others. As we suffer and obey God, our cup is pressed out larger and larger. 2 Co 4:17. This does not mean we earn our salvation, which is a gift we receive by faith. Ep 2:8-9

Many of the "rewards" for the Christian life are intrinsic rather than extrinsic. In other words, we don't get a hundred bucks for reading our Bibles, but we do receive many blessings inherent in Bible study. It works the same way in the "reward" for practicing a sport or a musical instrument. God promises us that if we follow him that he will be our reward. Gn 15:1 (NIV)

Our rewards for righteousness

Our rewards from God come only if our acts of righteousness are secret

You must not tell what you have done or try to make it known.

Acts of righteousness cannot ultimately be hidden. Mt 5:14

When you keep service secret

You are acting on faith that God is more real than people

You are putting pride to death

"The flesh whines at service but screams at secret service." Foster

You are fearing God more than man.

Definition of service: Engaging in Kingdom activities not because they need to be done, but because we need to do them.

Qualifications for acts of service

- 1) Must be done for the Kingdom benefit of another.
- 2) We must not be in control. We humble ourselves when we offer service.
- 3) The more worldly status we have, the more important this discipline is and the more humbling it should be.

4) True service is not done for recognition from people.

Examples of Service

- 1) Cutting someone's grass
- 2) Sharing the Gospel with people
- 3) Giving money
- 4) Visiting the sick or elderly
- 5) Cleaning things around the house
- 6) Playing with your little brother or sister – the games they want to play
- 7) Praying for others

Sacrifice – Service can put us in situations where we feel called to give our of our needs instead of our abundance.

- 1) Giving cuts into our wants
- 2) Sacrifice cuts into our needs Lk 21:4
- 3) Sacrifice show that we love God more than ourselves.
- 4) “The cautious faith that never saws off the limb on which it is sitting never learns that unattached limbs may find strange, unaccountable ways of not falling.” Dallas Willard
- 5) Things we sacrifice – Time, energy, money, room in our homes.

Warnings

- 1) We never sacrifice solely because of need, because God has no need
- 2) We never sacrifice because someone else pressures us into it
- 3) We encourage people to give, sacrifice is between them and God alone
- 4) We never sacrifice for others. Talk to your spouse before you sign him/her up for something.

Jesus and these Disciplines

- 1) Service – Footwashing (John 13); Mk 10:45
- 2) Secrecy – Mk 8:22-26; Mk 1:44.
- 3) Sacrifice – Gave his life for us on the cross after giving his whole life.

Further Reading: *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster; *Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard.

Sermon Seven
Confessing Our Way to Freedom
James 5:16-17

Spiritual Disciplines – Confession

Our sinful selves

We are all sinful, even after conversion. 1 Jo 1:8

The seed of all sin is in your heart. Ro 7:21-24

What goes on in your mind shows your sinfulness. Ja 1:10

The sins you rehearse in your mind are the sins you will do in your body when you have the opportunity. Ja 1:14-15

The missing element in our battle with sin is confession

Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) – Chapter XV, sections V & VI. “Men ought not to content themselves with a general repentance, **but it is every man’s duty to endeavor to repent of his particular sins, particularly.** As every man is bound to make private confession of his sins to God, praying for the pardon thereof; upon which, and the forsaking of them, he shall find mercy; so, he that scandalizeth his brother, or the church of Christ, ought to be willing, by a private or public confession, and sorrow for his sin, to declare his repentance to those that are offended, who are thereupon to be reconciled to him, and in love to receive him.”

General Confession – An admission of general sinfulness, often as a part of worship.

Particular Confession – A confession of sin which identifies actual real sins on the part of the confessor(s).

Corporate Confession – A confession of sins committed by the body.

Secret Confession – Confession of sin to God alone.

Personal Confession – Confession of sin to the injured party(ies).

Public Confession – Confession of sin before the whole body of Christ.

Why confess our sins?

- 1) Because it is not the well who need a physician, but those who are sick. Mt 9:12
- 2) Because it shows us our constant need of the atoning work of Christ.
- 3) Because it brings humility and destroys pride which is the foundation of self-righteousness.
- 4) Because confession is one of the paths to Authentic Community.
- 5) Because confession restores us not only with God, but the community to itself and to God. Lev 26:40-42
- 6) Because it is a witness to God’s grace. Destroys view of Xtians as hypocrites. Allows others to see the availability of grace (our children).
- 7) Shows that X, not we, is the righteous one. Acts 3:14
- 8) Because if we don’t, we will waste away. Ps 32:4

- 9) Because revival is bound up with repentance. Mk 1:5
- 10) Because it is evidence of true conversion. Acts 19:18
- 11) Because confession brings about freedom from the sin and healing. Ja 5:16
- 12) Because forgiveness and sanctification come through the instrument of confession. 1 Jo 1:9

How do we confess our sins?

- 1) We admit that our actions, words and thoughts are sin.
- 2) We must name our sins. Mk 1:5
- 3) We always confess to God first. We do this secretly, and with one another. We do this with one another, not with a priest. Ja 5:16
- 4) We confess as well to the people that we have sinned against.
- 5) When we confess our sins we disregard the sin of the other entirely. We don't do it as a manipulation to get them to confess theirs. Nu 5:7 (confess and restitution +20%) We make whatever amends possible – this is not penance (paying for sin) but the nature of repentance. If no opportunity to amend with offended, it may be made to God. (Zaccheus in Lk 17)
- 6) We ask for forgiveness for what we have done.
- 7) We confess our sins at least at the level which they are generally known. Lk 17
- 8) We confess our sins at the level of humiliation it takes to obtain freedom.
- 9) We refrain from defending ourselves.
- 10) We confess our sins knowing that a gracious savior is ready to receive us. Mt 11:28
- 11) We confess our sins knowing that we have an advocate with the Father right now. 1 Jo 2:1
- 12) We confess our sins knowing that the sacrifice of Jesus covers all sin, for all time. He 10:14

Further Reading: *The Westminster Confession of Faith; The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous.*

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