

The Spiritual Disciplines of Jesus

Mark 1: ³⁵ And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. ³⁶ And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, ³⁷ and they found him and said to him, “Everyone is looking for you.” ³⁸ And he said to them, “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.” ³⁹ And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. (ESV)

What spiritual disciplines do you see Jesus using in this passage?

From your knowledge of the Gospels what additional spiritual disciplines do you expect that Jesus practiced?

Why did Jesus need to practice spiritual discipline?

Personal Application

What is the condition of your spiritual life right now?

What is God longing to pour into your life right now?

What is God’s invitation to you today? This week?

I Am the True Vine

John 15 (ESV) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. 7 If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. 9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

²⁶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. ²⁷ And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

First reading: Is there a word or phrase that you are drawn to? What might God be saying to you through this word or phrase?

Read the passage again slowly. There are three priorities listed. The first is in verses 1-11. The second in Verse 12. The third in verses 26-27. The overall question we want to explore: What impact could/should these priorities have on my communication/writing?

What is the condition of your branch? How firmly are you abiding in the vine? How much/what kind of fruit are you seeing?

How does the great commandment in verse 12 flow out of abiding in the vine.

How are you bearing witness in your writing/communication? What fruit are you seeing from this witness?

The God-process of “Pitcher/Cup ... Saucer/Plate”

Pitcher: The *pitcher* represents all that God is -- both _____ and _____ -- and longs to _____ into the cup of my life: His very being, His existence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, His character, and His _____ for my life.

Cup: The *cup* represents my life. It is the unique and distinctive cup of who I am—of who God created me to be and of all that God longs for me to become. God desires to continually _____ Himself into the cup of my life until it _____ with His character and grace.

Saucer: The divine overflow spills onto the *saucer*. The saucer represents _____, the network of _____ my life touches, however frequently or infrequently. The divine overflow from my cup spills onto the saucer.

Plate: The *plate* represents the events, the places, and the _____ where God’s gracious presence in my life can further overflow through me, and at times, through my leadership responsibilities. Thus there is _____ in every event or place that I am in. I am to be the presence and life of _____.

Romans 15:13, May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

My Soul Thirsts for You: Psalm 63

Before sleeping tonight, slowly read this psalm. Focus on a word or phrase and go to sleep meditating on that word or phrase.

- 1 O God, you are my God;
earnestly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- 2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
- 3 Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
- 4 So I will bless you as long as I live;
in your name I will lift up my hands.
- 5 My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,
- 6 when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
- 7 for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings
I will sing for joy.
- 8 My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.
- 9 But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
- 10 they shall be given over to the power of the sword;
they shall be a portion for jackals.
- 11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Jesus Calms a Storm

Mark 4:35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side."
36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" **Mark 5:1** They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. (ESV)

First reading: What word or phrase is capturing your attention? Why?

Second reading: Imagine you are one of the disciples and you are in the boat. Experience it. What are you seeing? Hearing? Smelling? Feeling? Thinking?

In what way do you identify with the disciples in this story?

Third reading: How would you describe the condition of your faith? What faith challenge are you facing, in your personal life and/or in your writing or communication ministry? What is Jesus saying to you about your faith?

Reading for Spiritual Formation

"We have available to us all the information we need.... It's all there between the covers of our Bible. And we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach us using our experiences, the advice of godly counselors, and the information handed down via the prophets and apostles. Nevertheless, we must listen...in quietness." (Charles Swindoll)

"We don't form our personal spiritual lives out of a random assemblage of favorite texts in combination with individual circumstances; we are formed by the Holy Spirit in accordance with the text of Holy Scripture. God does not put us in charge of forming our personal spiritualities. We grow in accordance with the revealed Word implanted in us by the Spirit." (Eugene Peterson)

Lectio Divina

_____ the text

_____ on the text

_____ the text

_____ the text

"In our reading of this book we come to realize that what we need is not primarily informational, telling us things about God and ourselves, but formational, shaping us into our true being." (Eugene Peterson)

"Opening and lingering in the scriptures...it's not something I do; it's Someone I'm with." (Chuck Miller)

"The storehouse of God's Word was never meant for mere scrutiny, not even primarily for study, but for sustenance. ... It is rations for the soul, resources of and for the spirit, treasure for the inner man."
(Vance Havner)

The Discipline of Prayer

The Book of Acts is filled with prayer meetings; every forward thrust the first church made was immersed in prayer. Take another look at the church at Pentecost. They prayed ten days and preached ten minutes and three thousand people were saved. Today we pray ten minutes and preach ten days and are ecstatic if anyone is saved. (Ron Dunn)

“True, whole prayer is nothing but love.” (St. Augustine)

Our challenge:

- Pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17, NAS, ESV)
- Pray continually (I Thess. 5:17, NIV)
- Pray all the time (I Thess. 5:17, Message)

What do you think this verse means?

Five Ways to Pray Continually:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Also consider a _____ Prayer

Thanksgiving and Prayer

Ephesians 1:15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, **16** I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, **17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, **18** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **21** far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. **22** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, **23** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (ESV)

List a few of the readers you know you have touched with your words. Thank God for them.

Visualize in your mind your readers for your next article or blog or book, or the audience for your next talk. Do you know any by name? What is the nature of your audience? Male or Female? Ethnic background? Teenagers? Young adults? Mature adults? Are they hurting? How? Are they married? Divorced? Widowed?

Using the words of Ephesians 1:15-22, pray for your readers or listeners. Linger over each phrase as you pray, asking God for insight into the needs of your audience and also for what may on God's heart for these people.

If you gain any insights to the people you are praying for, write that down here:

**Contemplative Planning Process
For Writers and Communicators**

Briefly write down the article, book, talk, blog or other assignment you must prepare:

Who is the audience for this message?

Discern Where Individual People/Readers Are
(With God, others, themselves, and with their ministry)

(Use additional pages or journal space to continue writing your people insights)

Discern Where People/Readers Are Collectively
(With God, others, themselves, and with their ministry)

- *Notice and celebrate with God their common strengths*

- *Feel God's heart for their common concerns*

Discover What's On God's Heart for These People/Readers...This Event, Book, Article, Blog
(What outcomes does God desire?)

Design the Event/Article/Book in light of God's desires and where the people are:

Elements of your message. Scripture Passage(s). Story or Stories to illustrate your theme. Outline. Chapter summaries. Etc.

After the event or publication, Re-evaluate Each of the Steps

Take time to celebrate what God did. What was good in the design? What happened in the people?

What outcomes are you grateful for? What did you learn from the process?

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Selected Bibliography on Spiritual Formation and Discernment

Prayer: The Real Battle by Brother Andrew and Al Janssen (2009, Open Doors). This is a quick read with several ideas for strengthening your prayer life.

Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups by Ruth Haley Barton (2012, IVP Books). I've found all of Ruth's books very helpful. This one is particularly geared towards Leadership teams but I found a lot of practical help for discernment. It's also a reminder that discernment doesn't occur in isolation.

An Unhurried Life: Following Jesus' Rhythms of Work and Rest by Alan Fadling (2013, IVP Books). Alan is Founder of Unhurried Living. He has helped lead Journey Retreats for more than 25 years.

Discernment Matters: Listening with the Ear of the Heart by Mary Margaret Funk (2013, Liturgical Press). Mary Margaret Funk is a Benedictine nun who has written extensively on spiritual disciplines. This book covers much of what she's written in other books in the context of discernment.

Kneeling with Giants: Learning to Pray with History's Best Teachers by Gary Neal Hansen (2012, IVP Books). Fascinating book on a variety of prayer practices.

The Spiritual Formation of Leaders by Chuck Miller (2007, Xulon Press). This is a foundational book for me and our ministry leadership. I have read the book several times and marked it extensively. Chuck's teaching and mentoring is helping to transform our organization.

Shaped by the Word by M. Robert Mulholland Jr. (Revised Edition 2000, Upper Room Books). An excellent resource that will help you read Scripture for spiritual formation.

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives by Dallas Willard (1988, Harper One). Dallas Willard was one of the leaders of the recent spiritual formation movement. His best known work is *The Divine Conspiracy* which is well worth the work to read. However, I found this book more helpful because of its practical nature.

Hearing God: Developing a Conversational Relationship with God by Dallas Willard (Updated & Expanded 2012, IVP Books). Besides the great teaching I found the six lectio exercises extremely valuable.