

Spiritual Disciplines or Exercises

“A discipline for the spiritual life is nothing but an activity undertaken to bring us into more effective cooperation with Christ and his Kingdom.....Spiritual disciplines, “exercises unto godliness,” are only activities undertaken to make us capable of receiving more of his life and power.”
Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

*The list below is taken from *The Spiritual Formation Bible* edited by Richard Foster.*

As a general rule, practicing those exercises which involve us abstaining from something (fasting, silence, solitude, simplicity/frugality, secrecy, sacrifice) helps us to be set free from actions, attitudes, habits in our lives that we know are not godly.

Those that involve us engaging with something (study, service, fellowship, worship, prayer, confession, submission) help us to do those things in our lives that God wants us to do.

Celebration: Utter delight and joy in ourselves, our life, and our world as a result of our faith and confidence in God’s greatness, beauty and goodness.

Confession: Sharing our deepest weaknesses and failures with God and trusted others, so that we may enter into God’s grace and mercy and experience his ready forgiveness and healing.

Fasting: The voluntary abstention from an otherwise normal function – most often eating – for the sake of intense spiritual activity.

Fellowship: Engaging with other disciples in the common activities of worship, study, prayer, celebration, and service, which sustain our life together and enlarge our capacity to experience more of God.

Guidance: Experiencing an interactive friendship with God that gives direction and purpose to daily life.

Meditation: Prayerful rumination upon God, his Word, and his world.

Prayer: Interactive conversation with God about what we and God are thinking and doing together.

Sacrifice: Deliberately forsaking the security of satisfying our own needs with our resources in the faith and hope that God will sustain us.

Secrecy: Consciously refraining from having our good deeds and qualities generally known, which, in turn, rightly disciplines our longing for recognition.

Service: Loving, thoughtful, active promotion of the good of others and the causes of God in our world, through which we experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves.

Silence: Closing off our souls from “sounds”, whether noise, music, or words, so that we may better still the inner chatter and clatter of our noisy hearts and be increasingly attentive to God.

Simplicity/frugality: The inward reality of single-hearted focus upon God and his kingdom, which results in an outward lifestyle of modesty, openness, and unpretentiousness and which disciplines our hunger for status, glamour, and luxury.

Solitude: The creation of an open, empty space in our lives by purposefully abstaining from interaction with other human beings, so that, freed from competing loyalties, we can be found by God.

Study: The intentional process of engaging the mind with the written and spoken Word of God and the world God has created in such a way that the mind takes on an order conforming to the order upon which it concentrates.

Submission: Subordination to the guidance of God; within the Christian fellowship, a constant mutual subordination out of reverence for Christ, which opens the way for particular subordination to those who are qualified to direct our efforts toward Christlikeness and who then add the weight of their wise authority on the side of our willing spirit to help us to do the things we would like to do and refrain from doing the things we don't want to do.

Worship: Expressing in words, music, rituals, and silent adoration the greatness, beauty, and goodness of God, by means of which we enter the supranatural reality of the *shekinah*, or glory, of God.