

Core Spiritual Disciplines for Healthy Ministry

1. Solitude and Silence

a. Description:

- Solitude is the experience of time intentionally set aside from all human relationships, to focus on being with God. In solitude, you may practice other disciplines as well.
- Silence is the practice of God's presence without the distracting stimuli of outside noises, music, conversation, reading or internal chatter

b. Purpose:

- To learn to be anonymous; letting go of the need to be acknowledged, followed, honored
- To freely experience God's love, without performing

c. Practices:

- Quiet mornings, Quiet days, alone or with others. (Reserve a place; plan and guard the date; get prayer support.)
- 3-day or 8-day silent retreats offered at many Christian retreat centers, with a group, or individually with a spiritual director.

2. Study

a. Description:

- Following a planned course of reading or classroom work to learn about God, God's Word and/or God's Work in the world

b. Purpose:

- To understand the world God has called us to live in
- To develop and sharpen the mind
- To gain skills for ministry and service

c. Practices:

- Inductive Scripture study for fresh insights and application of the Word
- Church or seminary classes (or others)
- A personal plan of reading to gain mastery of a topic
(Note: study is different from preparing to give a talk or sermon!)

3. Meditation and Contemplation

a. Definition:

- Christian meditation is a kind of "chewing of the cud"; deep reflection, turning over and pondering of a text or concept to get to its essential meaning. (It is not "emptying the mind.")
- Contemplation is a restful gazing upon God, or holding a truth or insight from God. It follows naturally from meditation. (When God proclaimed of His Creation, "It is very good," and rested on the 7th day, He gave us a picture of contemplation.)

b. Purpose:

- To "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16)
- To abide in Christ and "delight yourself in the Lord" (Ps 37:4)
- To learn to be aware of the heart, as well as the mind, in God's presence

c. Practices:

- Lectio Divina and Ignatian Bible study – allowing the text to speak to your soul
- Scripture memorization
- Nature prayer walks and contemplation of nature
- Meditating on art work, icons, photography

- Journaling

4. **Prayer**

a. Definition:

- Communication with and listening to God; formal or informal, planned or spontaneous

b. Purpose:

- To develop a deepening relationship with the Lord in which we have growing freedom to hear His voice, to know His heart for the world, and to share our lives with Him, as we ask for what we need to fulfill His purposes.

c. Practices:

- Intercession – “Prayer is the work; ministry is the fruit”
- Resting in God’s presence; adoration; “just sitting” with the Lord
- Confession and self-examination; giving and receiving forgiveness
- Worship – individual and corporate, entering into God’s holy and powerful presence
- Prayer ministry – praying with others for healing, forgiveness, salvation, deliverance

5. **Community**

a. Definition:

- A group of believers committed to mutual support, spiritual growth and service to the Lord

b. Purpose:

- To live as a member of the Body of Christ, growing in faith, self-awareness, and self-giving love

c. Practices:

- Developing and investing in friends (outside of your ministry setting) who know and love you
- Healthy church involvement where you receive teaching and care, and offer your gifts
- A Mentor, Spiritual Director, Accountability partner or Small Group that helps you to discern God’s will and to grow in Christ

6. **Rest**

a. Definition:

- Ceasing from activity and allowing the Lord to restore your body, mind & spirit

b. Purpose:

- to develop life-giving rhythms of rest in order to fully receive God’s grace and mercy, according to His commands.

c. Practices:

- Sabbath – 24-hour day with the Lord in worship, rest and celebration with others
- Consistent Bedtime –guarding sleep hours, and establishing healthy rhythms
- Stop-work time – commitment to a time when computers are turned off, phones are not

answered

7. **Review and Reflection, & Planning (individual and household)**

a. Definition:

- Regular time set aside for personal and family/household planning of calendar activities, work, school, social and play times, self-care and spiritual disciplines

b. Purpose:

- to align activities with life purpose, rule of life, and calling; to share in mutual discernment and planning with family/household members

c. Practices:

- Examen – reflecting on “desolation” and “consolation” of the past day: “Where did I experience God’s presence today?” “Where did I miss God today?”

- Weekly calendar planning
- Monthly review of Rule of Life; calendar planning
- Quarterly or Yearly review and revision of Rule of Life; calendar planning

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