

United in Love

Philippians 2:1-11

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Rather train yourself for godliness; 8for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.
1 Timothy 4:7b-8 (English Standard Version)

THE “WHY” OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

“**Spiritual formation** is the process that takes place in believers as God transforms our lives through deepening love and intimacy with Him.” Thomas Ashbrook

“Abide in me and I in you . . .” John 15:4a (ESV)

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” Acts 2:42 (ESV)

The “why” of spiritual disciplines: They both deepen our love for God and train our souls.

THE “WHAT” OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Spiritual disciplines = intentional practices, relationships and experiences that open our hearts to God, express love to Him and allow Him to shape our lives.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Romans 12:1 (ESV)

Core Disciplines

- [Prayer](#)
- [Bible Reading](#)
- [Service](#)
- [Giving](#)
- [Corporate Worship](#)
- [Time Alone with God](#)

THE “HOW” OF SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Rule for Life: A regular pattern of practices, experiences and relationships that—as I submit to them over time—foster relationship with God and [create space](#) for Christ to be fully formed in me.

The Lord's Prayer As a Pattern for Intercession

- "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."
Spend some time thanking God for his fatherly love and attention. Ponder who he is and adore his majesty, holiness, sovereignty, goodness and beauty.
- "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Turn your intercession to God's purposes in the world. Where are you trying to bring in *your* kingdom rather than putting your efforts toward *God's* kingdom agenda? Confess where God's priorities have been replaced with your own. Consider what God's kingdom agenda might be in your relationships and in the world. Pray for these things. What might partnering with God around his will look like?
- "Give us this day our daily bread." Pray for your needs and those whose lives are closely linked with your own.
Pray for those who are in danger, suffering and in places of decision making or costly love.
- "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Confess your grudges, bitterness and oversensitivity; dwell at the foot of the cross. Thank God for what it is like to be forgiven.
- "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." As you look ahead into your day, notice the tasks and transactions ahead of you. Where might you get off track? Become aware of the ways you may be tempted to spin the truth, manage your image, live out of your false self, lose your patience or envy another.
Pray for the Spirit to work in you to change you. Ask for protection and courage for the day.
- "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."
End your time of intercession with prayers of trust in God's goodness and his redemptive plan.

Taken from Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun.

Crafting a Rule for Life

A regular pattern of practices, experiences and relationships that—as I submit to them over time—foster relationship with God and create space and opportunity for Christ to be fully formed in me.

- Evaluate your spiritual needs over a few days or weeks.
Take into account . . .
 - Your schedule
 - Your spiritual needs; your deepest spiritual desires
 - Your personality type
 - Arrangements that may need to be made
 - Ask yourself good questions about how you use your time, when you feel closest to God, and who you want to become.

Think about the answers.

- Write out a "rule for life" that includes practices, experiences and relationships you will incorporate into your life. Have a section for weekly, monthly, quarterly and yearly. A "rule for life" can include not only "spiritual" practices but also things like exercise, rest, etc. It's up to you how extensive you want to make it.

Books that Describe One or More Spiritual Disciplines:

- Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton (A very accessible and readable guide to establishing spiritual disciplines in your life.)
- The Good and Beautiful God, The Good and Beautiful Life, The Good and Beautiful Community, all by James Bryan Smith (These books are meant to help anyone who wants to be Jesus' apprentice. He outlines many disciplines throughout these books. These are great to use in group settings as well.)
- Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (This is a great reference guide for a wide variety of disciplines. Not meant to be read straight through.)
- The Spirit of the Disciplines by Dallas Willard (Yes, Willard is academic, but the content is thought-provoking and instructive.)
- Opening to God by David G. Benner (Very readable book on opening oneself up to God in prayer, especially "attending prayer.")
- Seeking God Together by Alice Fryling (This is a simple guide to helping groups who want to concentrate on spiritual conversations together that will move them forward in God.)
- Crafting a Rule of Life by Stephen A Macchia (For those who want to take some real time to evaluate how their life is working as a whole to produce space for God.)