

DISCIPLINES OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

April 18, 2021
Week 1: Prayer

When we discipline our heart, soul, and mind, we grow in God's grace. This transformational process takes practice. When we work at these spiritual disciplines, we can experience peace, joy, and freedom.

This week, Lead Pastor Christian Andrews began our eleven-week study with six practical steps to help us grow in the discipline of prayer.

Introduction Questions

1. How are you all doing? Show it with your thumb, on a range between great (thumbs up) and poor (thumbs down). Share one good thing about your week.
2. How would a spider wear a monocle? On one eye or on half of the eight?
3. What makes a conversation a good conversation for you?
4. How would you define prayer in one sentence? How would you define what prayer *isn't*?

Six Maxims for Learning to Pray

1. **Pray Often:** When do you pray? Is it something you do often or hardly ever? Why?
2. **Pray Authentically:** Is it hard to feel like you can share authentically with God when you pray? Why or why not? What might make you feel more comfortable? What gets in the way of being yourself with God?
3. **Pray Methodically:** Jesus taught his disciples to pray. How did you learn to pray? What is your method? Do you have any methods to share that might be helpful to the group?
4. **Pray Specifically:** Have you ever prayed for something and actually seen it happen the way you prayed? Have you ever seen God do a seemingly impossible thing because you prayed? Share a story.
5. **Pray Attentively:** When we pray, it is important to spend time listening to God. Why do we so rarely take time to be silent and listen attentively? How do you keep track of what you have been praying for? Have you ever seen God answer a prayer request that you prayed a long time for? What was that like?
6. **Pray Hopefully:** Why might Christian encourage us to pair challenges and requests with hope in our prayer? What verses do you cling to in hard times to bring you comfort, hope, or encouragement?

Challenge:

This week, choose to set aside time to pray. Share out loud with each other (and write it down for yourself) the time of day, location, duration, and frequency you will pray this week. You may also want to choose something very specific to pray for (optional). At next week's group, check in with your group members to see how it went and what they heard from God.

For Example: "I will get up at 7 am three times this week to sit at my kitchen table and pray for 15 minutes."

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“Palms Down, Palms Up” Prayer:

You may want to try the “Palms Down, Palms Up” prayer practice. (Have a leader or an experienced member lead the prayer.) If your group isn’t ready for this, try sitting in silence for a timed two minutes and then close with a simple prayer.

How to Lead the “Palms Down, Palms Up” Prayer:

1. Invite the group to sit in silence, with their hands resting in their lap.
2. Ask God, “What do you want us to let go of?” Then listen in silence.
3. After a minute or so, invite others to put their palms down, open their hands, and imagine dropping those things that God invited them to drop.
4. Then ask the opposite question. “What do you want me to hold onto?” Listen.
5. After a minute or so, invite the group to turn their palms up.
6. Share this: “Whatever God’s Spirit prompts in you, imagine receiving it from Him in your open hands. Hold onto it and ask God to enable you to receive it.”
7. Close with a brief word of prayer.

Self Assessment and Reflection:

1. In light of our 1 Thessalonians study, how have you grown in the last few months?
 - a. How have you grown in faith, learning to trust God and be more obedient?
 - b. How have you grown in love by both giving and accepting love?
 - c. How have you grown in hope, seeing your current struggles in light of Christ redeeming all things?
2. In light of Jesus’ reconciliation with Peter after the resurrection, how would you answer if Jesus came to *you* and asked, “Do you love me?”

Pray Together

1. Thank God for these past few months.
2. Ask God to keep you growing.
3. Pray for what you need.
4. Pray for what’s next with your group meeting together.