

# Introduction

## Relational Spirituality – Three Lesson Series

- ✓ October 23 - Loving God Completely
- ✓ October 30 - Loving Ourselves Correctly
- ✓ November 6 - Loving Others Compassionately
- ✓ May 28 - Disciplined Spirituality

## Last Time - Disciplined Spirituality

Discipline should work in concert with dependence, since grace is not opposed to effort but to earning. The multiple benefits of the time tested disciplines of the faith contribute to spiritual formation in the same way the training prepares us for skillful endeavor.

### Lesson Objective

- A balanced view of both dependence and discipline
- An appreciation for the multiple benefits of the spiritual disciplines

## Two Extremes

**The first extreme overemphasizes our role and minimizes God's role.**

**This position is characterized by the mentality of striving for and living for Jesus.**

**It emphasizes knowledge, rules, rededication efforts, and human activities and virtually ignores the ministry of the Holy Spirit.**

## Two Extremes

**The second extreme overemphasizes God's role and minimizes our role.**

**This position is characterized by a let go and let God passivity.**

**It stresses experience, the supernatural, and the person of the Holy Spirit and down plays the human element.**

## Two Extremes

The biblical balance is that the spiritual life is both human and divine.

Paul places these elements back to back in Philippians 2:12-13

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

## Disciplines of the Faith

### Lesson Objectives

- An ability to think through the various spiritual disciplines
- An understanding of the disciplines of solitude, silence, study, meditation, and prayer

## Introduction

There is no standardized list of spiritual disciplines, but some are more prominent in the literature than others.

Some writers have developed a threefold typology in

### 1. Inward Disciplines

- Meditation
- Prayer
- Fasting
- Study

## Introduction

### 2. Outward Disciplines

- Simplicity
- Solitude
- Submission
- Service

### 3. Corporate Disciplines

- Confession
- Worship
- Guidance
- Celebration

## Others Divide Them into Two Classes

1. Disciplines of Abstinence
  - Solitude
  - Silence
  - Fasting
  - Frugality
  - Chastity
  - Secrecy
  - Sacrifice
2. Disciplines of Engagement
  - Study
  - Worship
  - Celebration
  - Service
  - Prayer
  - Fellowship
  - Confession
  - Submission

## The Discipline of Solitude

For our study we will at two disciplines of abstinence (solitude and silence).

### The Discipline of Solitude

Even a casual look at the Gospels reveals that solitude was indispensable practice in the life of the

#### **Mathew 14:13**

<sup>23</sup> After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone,

## The Discipline of Solitude

### **Mark 1:35**

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

### **Luke 5:16**

16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

### **John 6:15**

15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

## The Discipline of Solitude

In the solitude of the wilderness Jesus prepared to inaugurate his public ministry.

### **Mathew 4:1-11**

4 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in the hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.' 7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test. 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

## The Discipline of Solitude

In the solitude of the mountain he prepared to select his disciples

### Luke 6:12-13

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:

In the solitude of the garden he prepared to sacrifice his life the sins of the world.

### Mathew 26:36-46

36 Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." 39 Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." 40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. 41 "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 42 He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." 43 When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. 44 So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing. 45 Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour has come, and the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

Solitude transcends loneliness; whenever Jesus sought solitude, it was to be in the presence of his Father.

It delivers us from the tyranny and distractions of the daily routine and prepare us for the next stage of the journey through an inner call rather than external compulsion.

By periodically distancing ourselves from schedules, noises, and crowds, we become less captivated by the demands and expectations of others and in terms of what God thinks rather than what people think.

## The Discipline of Silence

Silence is a catalyst of solitude; it prepares the way for inner seclusion and enables us to listen to the quiet voice of the Spirit.

Solitude and Silence are companion disciplines; silence gives depth to solitude, and solitude creates a place for silence.

“Where shall the world be found, where will the word resound?  
Not here, there is not enough silence.”

When TS Eliot wrote these words, he accurately captured the spirit of our time and culture.

**Isaiah 30:15**

15 This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says:  
"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.

The transformational discipline of silence encourages us to grow in quietness and trust; by being hushed before God so that we can listen with our spirit to him and enjoy his presence.

Silence in the presence of others can be practiced by deliberately speaking less than we otherwise would.

**James 1:19**

19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

Silence not only increases our poise and credibility but also enables us to be better observers and more effective, others centered listeners.

The discipline of silence before God and people relates to the practice of self-control; the more we develop inner control and composure, the less we will feel compelled to gain outward control over people and circumstances.

## Next Week

### Prayer

- Prayer is a personal communication and dialogue with the living God.
- Seen from a biblical perspective, prayer is an opportunity and a privilege rather than a burden or duty.
- It is the meeting place where we draw near to God to receive His grace, to release our burdens and fears, and to be honest with the Lord.
- Prayer should not be limited to structured times but should also become an ongoing dialogue with God as we practice his presence in the context of our daily activities.

## Next Week

### Study

- The discipline of study is the central process of renewing the mind in such a way that we can respond appropriately to the truths of God's Word.
- Study of scripture involves not only reading but also in active involvement in observation, interpretation, and application of its contents.
- It also includes devotional reflection on the beauties and intricacies of nature as well as exposure to gifted writers and teachers of the past and in the present.

## Next Week

### Meditation

- Meditation is a close relative of the disciplines of prayer and study, and it also depends on the disciplines of solitude and silence.
- Meditation has become such a lost art in the West that we typically associate it with Eastern religions.
- Far from emptying the mind, however, biblical meditation focuses the mind on the nuances of the revealed Scripture so that its truth can sink deeply into our being.