



SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES
W O R K S H O P

A Personalized Journey

Now that you've read about spiritual disciplines, we'd like to help you think about their place in your life. If you're new to spiritual disciplines, complete the "Getting Started" section. If you've been practicing some spiritual disciplines, skip "Getting Started" and complete the "Taking Stock" portion.



Getting Started

Complete this section if you're new to spiritual disciplines and would like to know where to start.

1. One way to tell where a spiritual discipline might be needed is to look at your areas of spiritual pressure or longing. Perhaps one or more of the following questions will help you uncover these areas.

• About which areas of your life do you regularly find yourself expressing regret or frustration? _____

• Are there habits or sins about which you feel the Holy Spirit's conviction but against which you feel powerless? List them here. _____

• Do you ever hear about an aspect of life with God and catch yourself thinking, *I wish that were true of my relationship with God?* If so, describe it. _____

• Is there a way you'd like to serve or relate to God but you find that your ordinary life and habits create obstacles? (e.g., "I'd really like to pray more, but I can't seem to remember to do it.")

2. Look back over the areas you've listed, and ask God to direct you to the place He'd like you to start. Which area resonates the strongest with you? _____

3. What would be needed to address this area?
- Freedom from something
 - Fortitude to do something differently
 - Focus to keep you pointed in the right direction

4. At the bottom of the page is a summary of the spiritual disciplines profiled in the "Soul Building" article by Paul Thigpen (Sep/Oct 2004, Issue 143). Does one seem like a good fit for the area of pressure or longing you've identified? For more help, glance back at the "What are some indicators that I might need this discipline?" sections in the profiles. (You can find this article in our online archives, www.discipleshipjournal.com.) For now, just choose *one* discipline. You have the rest of your life to explore the others! _____

5. How might practicing that discipline draw you closer to God? _____

6. Reread that discipline's profile in the "Soul Building" article. Choose an action step (again, just *one*) from "How might I start?" Write down a specific way you will begin to incorporate that action step into your everyday life. _____

Disciplines Profiled in "Soul Building" (Sep/Oct 2004, Issue 143)

DISCIPLINES OF FREEDOM

Abstinence. Forbearing from indulging a natural appetite (such as for food, drink, sleep, sex, or leisure)

Simplicity. Taming the desire for possessions

Stillness. Withdrawing for a season from a normal activity (such as work, play, or con-

versation) in order to place oneself—alone and silent—in God's presence

DISCIPLINES OF FORTITUDE

Meditation. Setting aside time to think carefully about what God may be saying through Scripture, spiritual reading, or the thoughts that He brings to mind

Prayer. Conversing with God (spontaneously or in another's words, silently or aloud)

Reticence. Controlling the tongue by listening before speaking, listening more than speaking, or restraining from speech

DISCIPLINES OF FOCUS

Stability. Staying put when one ought to stay put

Worship. Taking one's eyes off oneself to focus on who God is

To read the entire article, search our online archives at www.discipleshipjournal.com.

Taking Stock

Complete this section if you already have some experience with spiritual disciplines.

1. Note the spiritual disciplines you are practicing on the lines below. Then, for each discipline, write the reason you're practicing it.

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Why I'm practicing it</i>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. Are your current disciplines effective? Beside each discipline above, put a "+" if it's having the effect on your walk with God that you desire. Put a "?" if you're not sure or a "-" if it's not producing an effect.

3. In Howard Baker's article on the seasons of disciplines, he describes how the Holy Spirit led him to different disciplines for different seasons of his spiritual life. "When a discipline is no longer forming me into Christlikeness," he says, "then it is time to let that one go and choose another." This can be a helpful rule of thumb for evaluating our spiritual practices, yet sometimes it's difficult to identify whether or not a discipline is forming us into Christlikeness. We need God's help. Pray about each one of the disciplines above that you marked with a "?" or a "-".

God, I've been faithfully practicing _____, but I can't see that it is producing fruit in my walk with You. Will You show me if You want me to continue this discipline regardless of the results or if You might want me to let it go for this season?

4. Direction from God regarding your disciplines may come quickly or it may be a longer process. Make notes about your first impressions of what God is saying, but be open to a longer conversation with Him as well.

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>What God may be saying to me about this discipline</i>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. If you're letting go of a discipline, is it time to replace it or do you need some space before you do?

6. If it's time to replace a discipline, consider the questions under "Getting Started." You might also want to consider a less traditional discipline. In "Taking the 'Ugh' out of Spiritual Disciplines," Stacey Padrick defined disciplines as "any practice that, when intentionally and regularly engaged in, turns your heart toward God, deepens your relationship with Him, and transforms you—however slightly or slowly—to be more Christ-like." She told how, after noticing a habit of discontent, she started practicing deliberate gratefulness. If there is a similar pattern in your life that you'd like to counter, consider what new habit might be most effective.

- Pattern you'd like to replace: _____
- Habit to replace it with: _____
- Specific plan for practicing that new habit: _____

