

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES HANDBOOK



What are Spiritual Disciplines?

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun in her *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* writes that the disciplines are, “Intentional practices, relationships and experiences that give people space in their lives to “keep company” with Jesus.”

By practicing spiritual disciplines, we are making space for God and keeping company with God. We are creating intentional space for grace to heal us

There are many ancient practices that have long been considered spiritual disciplines, but to us, almost anything can be a spiritual discipline if practiced with the right intention, because in our eyes the disciplines are more defined by posture than practice.

The disciplines are an invitation - an invitation to surrender control, keep company with Jesus, and invite him to speak. They are restful work - transforming and healing us from the inside out.

The disciplines are merely tools, but they are tools that you can use to bring meaning, depth, and richness to your life with God.

We have chosen to structure this brief introduction to the disciplines around the four primary relationships in our lives: the relationship with God, with ourselves, with others, and with the natural world.

Grace and peace to you as you begin your journey.

THE FOUR PRACTICES

God:
Rest

Self:
Examen

Others:
Spiritual
Listening

Creation:
Visio Divina

GOD:REST

We are created in the image of a God who rests - a God who pours God's image out on each of us as a gift every day, and that image includes the gift of rest. This is an apt discipline to begin with because spiritual disciplines are inherently restful work. For those of us addicted to achievement, the holistic rest of the disciplines - rest for the mind, body, heart, and soul - can be a rude awakening.



LET'S PRACTICE!

1.) Set aside time in your calendar, create a safe and quiet space, and silence your phone. Prepare a space for God to speak to you and allow God to love you.

2.) Incorporate solitude, silence, and stillness into your rest practice as much as possible, while still defining what is restful for you.

3.) Tune into your mind and body as you rest. What thoughts or feelings come up for you as you start to rest? Notice it all - but try not to pass judgment.

4.) Find a phrase that resonates that you can repeat to yourself like, "I am worthy," or "I am not what I produce."

SELF:EXAMEN


Examen is an ancient spiritual practice first codified by Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556). He structured the practice around what he called, "Desolations," and "Consolations" - in more modern language, what brings joy, life, and purpose and what drains joy, life, and purpose.

The foundational assumption behind the Examen practice is that God is already speaking to us through the everyday stuff of our lives. The foundational skill of Examen, then, is to learn to pay attention to the ways God is already speaking, and to honor and love the person God created each of us to be.





LET'S PRACTICE!

- 1.) Regularly set aside time to practice Examen – ideally each day, but give yourself grace to grow your practice.
 - 2.) Begin by asking yourself questions like, “What made me feel loved today?” and, “What made me feel unloved today?” and, “What gave me life today?” and, “What drained life from me today?”
 - 3.) Journal your responses to these questions. Be as descriptive as possible and pay attention to the feelings you describe.
 - 4.) Every few months, look back over your journaling and see if themes emerge.
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OTHERS: SPIRITUAL LISTENING

Spiritual listening is a tool to help us care for others. It is not simply a cliché to say that people do not need you to solve their problems for them. In fact, to think that it is our job to solve the problems of others is a misunderstanding of our role in their lives. Rather, what people need is someone to listen, to ask meaningful questions, and to hold space with them as they journey through the difficult things of life.



LET'S PRACTICE!

- 1.) Remember that you are on holy ground - Christ is present with you in this conversation and the Holy Spirit is moving and working.
- 2.) Let go of the compulsive need to fix or to give advice. As you listen, take deep breaths to remind yourself to stay present and actively listening.
- 3.) Ask meaningful questions that invite the person to turn inward and reflect on their own story with God.
- 4.) If you don't know what else to say or are feeling overwhelmed, say, "Thank you for sharing that," and then ask, "How are you inviting me to respond?"



CREATION: VISIO DIVINA

Visio Divina or Holy Sight is defined by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun in her *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* as, "an intentional seeking after God by simply looking at things." In creation Christ gave himself to this world. The world is not God; we do not worship the world, but we can choose to see the bit of Godself that God poured into it by gaining new sight. Only by transforming the way we see the world and everything in it, ourselves included, can we ever truly love our world and ourselves as we should.



LET'S PRACTICE!

1.) Enter nature as a guest. Allow stillness, silence, and solitude to enrich your practice.

2.) As you are in nature, reflect on your place as a member of the created order. How does it change your sight to believe you, too, are an intended part of creation?

3.) Meditate on Matthew 6:25-34 and allow yourself to consider how much more God cares for you than for the birds.

4.) Include humanity in your Visio Divina practice - begin to see the beauty in God's most dazzling and difficult creation - humankind.



PEOPLE *who* SEE



Resources and Suggested Reading:
Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us
by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun
Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth
by Richard J. Foster

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