

Cultivate Depth : Practices to Deepen Your Life in God

Introduction to Spiritual Practices

Hold these questions in your mind during the teaching time:

What invitation might God have for me today and in these next weeks?

Where are you currently connecting (or not) with God?

Think about “life-giving” moments in your days when you experience God’s goodness and grace.

The converse is worth contemplating too. Where are places/moments that drain life from you?

Have you had an experience with God where you were overcome with emotion in responding to God?

Reminders:

This topic not for “super Christians” it is for ordinary followers of Christ.

The small things are the big things.

Keep it simple. Start small.

Do as you can, not as you can’t.

Saying no to what is good can mean saying yes to something better.

Formation takes time.

What is a spiritual practice?

A simple definition: *Anything that draws us closer to the heart of God and helps us to be aware of God’s presence and grace.*

The formation of our souls is a process that takes place every single day. Our ordinary lives in our ordinary days are the stuff of formation.

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We live in a world of distractions. Technology drives so much of our time and lives. Spiritual practices are the stuff of both our internal and external worlds. They help to pull our hearts toward God and others.

Why Spend Time with Spiritual Practices?

The person we are becoming matters to God.

Spiritual practices are a practical means by which we position ourselves before God so that God's grace can flow more deeply into our lives and gradually change us into the people God wants us to be.

Jesus engaged in spiritual practices. We get glimpses of some of his practices in the gospels.

We must offer ourselves to God daily. God never forces the divine upon us instead God waits for our freely given yes.

God's transforming grace will not enter our lives without our effort. Grace is opposed to earning but not to effort. (Dallas Willard)

Three Thoughts

1. V-I-M

- Vision** Is change really possible? In order for us to engage with God sufficiently for change to occur, having a vision for how my life might be different is vital. Vision is more often *caught* than taught.
- Intention** To get beyond the reach of our will, to transforming our hearts and minds to really become different people from the inside out requires direct participation with the Holy Spirit. And we have to make sufficient space in our lives for that relationship. It cannot be *life as usual*.
- Means** You are being gifted with a space in your faith community to come alongside one another in this season of "holy experiments" with God and with others.

2. Categories: Engagement/Abstinence

Take advantage of this time of experimenting with the practices. Try them on and see where your heart comes alive to God.

Disciplines/Practices of Engagement

These are things that we “do” with God.

Prayer, Service, Submission and Celebration are in this category.

Disciplines/Practices of Abstinence

Silence and solitude are foundational practices.

Solitude and Fasting are two practices you will engage with.

3. Begin where you are.

Where are the places where you are naturally connecting with God?

Do as you can, not as you can't.

Elongate one practice.

God is not pushy. God does not put demands on our time or our relationship.

Our beliefs about God matter. Doing things out of love is different from doing things out of obligation.

Conclusion

Take advantage of the gift of community. In person and online.

Enter into these “holy experiments” together.

Talk with one another about what is helpful or not helpful.

Practical Thoughts:

Block out the time.

If you are able to create one sacred space for yourself, do it.

Gather what you need in one place to have it handy.

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What invitation might God have for me today and in these next few weeks?

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